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POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION
A NOTE ON THE CAREER OF A CONCEPT

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Political socialization is the complex process of political education and political learning. It involves interactions which relate the political socializer with the political socializee in an appropriately durable way. As the 'middle term' there is a variety of orientations, termed aggregatively as the political culture or the political sub-culture, which enjoys a relative autonomy over both. This triad merges into the wider institutional complex of a society. The process is rather 'observable' or 'demonstrable' in the sense that ordinary men and women do observe a father, a peer, a political leader, a god-man or a film-director pursuading or dictating with some regularity and insistence someone to accept and act out a political attitude or a political value, a procedure or a posture. It is not difficult also to notice someone, young or old, disputing or succumbing, conforming or deviating, by way of a persistent response. A set of legitimate political preferences as one manifestation of a political culture is not beyond ordinary capacity for comprehension. Since the process has evident relation with power and management of a society there is at least an intuitive understanding of it among power-holders as well as their subjects Even then we do not find in the language of every-day life a linguistic expression for it. Hence the concept of political socialization despite its basis in common knowledge remains some-what specific to academic political analysis. It surpasses the everyday understanding, without always negating it though, because conceptualizers' impulse, insight and information usually direct them to uncommon meanings or uncommon extensions of meanings of common experiences. Which unconcerned individual would know,

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that his father's rage had something to do with his attitude to poli-
tical authority, or that the order in which he was born would induce
him to appreciate or avoid a model of partisan behaviour, or, that
the music to which he was exposed would increase his attachment to
a political regime ! The concept thrives on a 'special' understanding,
seldom on the so-called ordinary individual's recognition.

(1)

The process of political socialization is usually conceived as
transmission of political culture of a political community from the
politically 'mature' to the politically 'immature'. An objective
understanding of the process must be based upon location of efforts
at transmission and of unnoticed and unintended transfer of aspects
of political culture, of institutions engaged in or associated with such
transmission or transference as well as of responses of the intended
or potential recipients. Only when such a sequence can be isolated
and identified one can meaningfully talk about the process. A
recurrence at either of the levels, preferably at all of them, is a
usual pointer to the process of political socialization. As it increases
'visibility' of the process, it lends some objectivity to our under-
standing. This conception of the process is founded on comprehen-
sive literature. Most of the research works have been in the spirit
of 'the middle-range' approach, that is, confined to specific aspects of
political culture, or to a particular institutional agent, or a particular
outcome for the socializee in terms of development of his political
self. But because a good number of researchers have been working
on the concept for about two decades — one thought, displaying
'rabbit-like promiscuity' — and because of the self-correcting prin-
ciple, a certain comprehensiveness has been attained (Renshon, 1977,
p. 31 ; for a different assessment, see Jaros, 1973, p. 137).

The 'mature-immature' relationship, conceptualized as 'the poli-
tical socializer-political socializee' relationship, has been studied
mainly as an inter-generational relationship. This is the original and
still dominant way, of looking at the relationship, and through it, at
the process. In most researches lineage generational analysis is used
(Cutler in Renshon, 1977, p. 204). This is the logical outcome of
pursuing the major premise of political sociology. The focal point

of enquiry has been the Mendelian transmission of parents' political preferences regarding partisan support and domestic issues to children and adolescents. It is customary to think that the adult in possession of culture sets about through a sort of social 'instinct' to equip the young in the same, or, unknowingly sets up the parameters of cultural learning by the young. But as in general socialization process, in political socialization also it is possible that the grown-up offspring and the parent can 'exchange' positions in the 'mature-immature' relationship. This is likely to be the case with the emergence of new values, new ideology and new structures in politics of a community, or the offspring accepting an item of alien political culture, even utopian thought. For the adult 'immature' this is going through the complementary processes of de-socialization and re-socialization. Hence conceiving the interpersonal relationship basic to political socialization as 'the mature-immature' relationship has a greater heuristic value. Its obvious advantage is that it allows taking the political socializer-political socializee relationship off the peg of sheer birth order. Political socialization by the peer group, an expression of intra-generational political socialization, can be understood in the same light. There is usually one or two members of a peer group having a little more of information, of understanding, may be, even possessing some local charisma.

The projection of the process of political socialization as taking place through interpersonal interaction needs to be only marginally qualified to conceive political socializers in institutional terms, like family, school and party in stead of parent, teacher and leader, respectively. Evidently institutions command greater resources to be used as socializing inputs with elements of an institution reinforcing each other. No individual as a political socializer operates without any institutional linkage. It takes only a little commonsense to recognize that an individual political socializer himself has undergone a certain socializing experience. He is like 'capital' in material production, that is, a produced means of production — to be consonant with our vocabulary, — a socialized means of socialization or cultural reproduction, having no other meaningful existence beyond this framework. But despite this overarching nature of institutions, the process of political learning is never de-personalized. This is true even when we talk about a class socializing another class in its

dominant values to create a normative consensus (Parkin, 1972, p. 81).

A firmer basis for questioning the comprehensive validity of such a projection is in the incidence of self-political-socialization. Negatively speaking, this is political learning without active intervention by some political socializer, individual or institution. It conceives of the socializee as an activist and initiative-taking learner. This is a logical corollary of the widespread recognition that the process of political learning is a life-long process : from womb (Davies in Renshon, pp. 142-177) to adulthood (Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, Chap. IV ; Sigel, 1970, Chap. VII ; Sigel and Hoskin in Renshon, 1977, pp. 259-293). It is presumed that some adults once socialized into some core political orientation can and sometimes do work out congruent orientation all by himself. What intervene in this secondary political socialization are his experiences. It must be understood that a total lack of contact with socializing agents is not what characterises self-socialization. It is the relatively insignificant contribution of agents compared to socializee's capacity to learn by himself. Here again it is not presumed that he himself develops the categories for understanding political reality that accompanies such learning. The capacity for self-socialization is usually recognized as an attribute of the adult. But there is an interesting example based on biographical reports on two poor Brazilian slum children, Carlos (11 years old) and Maria (12 years old). It is about an acute understanding so early in their life about the role of religion, the police and the wealthy in shaping their existence. Incidentally, this is a rare departure from the mainstream of research on political socialization which till today remains confined with minor exception to urban middle class with some educational background in advanced industrialized countries, and which seldom takes poverty as a variable in political learning (for a marginal use, see Hirsch, 1971). To quote Robert Coles who attempts to analyse political socialization of children in a Brazilian favela :

   "A child is trying to figure out what possible (political) connection there can be between the favelados and those who live in luxuary. Suddenly a moment comes, however, when a neuro-chemical link is made, a thought accomplished

> "The police, they are the ones — they are the rope of Brazil.
> They hold the country together", he observes, "like a
> package my father carries upto our house, tied together
> tight" ... What else, the boy has reasoned, could keep
> "together" on the one hand, the brutish favela experience,
> melancholy, yet in ways hauntingly spirited, and on the
> other hand the ostentations press of the self-important
> rich ... " (Coles, 1981, p. 84).

This suggests that self-socialization is neither confined to adulthood
nor marginal to early basic socialization. The only way 'agency'
factor can be accomodated here is to consider historical milieu as a
critical agency of political socialization and learning (Cutler in
Renshon, 1977, p. 299) or to consider experience as the socializer
(Pollock, White, Gold in Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975, pp. 317-
333).

Whether it is learning through interaction with a political socia-
lizer or self-socialization to politics, no political socialization takes
place in an insulated condition. An environment always impinges
on the process. It consists of many and diverse institution of
politics, economy and culture. These gain entry into the process
through linkages the socializer and the socializee, particularly the
former, develops in course of performance of major social roles, or,
through a sense of equivalence between political institutions and
social institutions in the socializer and the socializee, particularly
the latter. Their influence may become apparent or may remain
unknown to those involved in political socialization. For lack of
adequate research attention the exact ways an environment affects
remain largely unknown even to the researchers (for some work see
Sigel, 1970, Chap. VIII ; Gustafsson in Niemi and Associates 1974).

(2)

It has been a rather rapid development from a concept that came
up in course of a preparation of "an inventory of accumulated
knowledge that psychology has already provided for politics"
(Hyman, 1959, p. 2) to a concept that has attained inter-disciplinary
relevance (Lasswell in Renshon, 1977, p. 445). The development of
the concept has been stimulated by two kinds of intellectual

activities : one, debate among researchers and commentators over models, appropriate theoretical linkages, relative efficacy of various political socialization agents, techniques of data collection and relevance of the process for the political system; the other, application of the concept to the realities of the socialist political system and of the non-socialist political systems of the 'third world'.

The first major exposition, the one by Hyman, was itself a critical response to psychoanalytic theory of personality. Since then almost every significant research work carries prefaces which are critical overtures or is a critical stock-taking motivating a new take-off (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975).

The debates in many cases are reflections of debates in the cognate social sciences like psychology, cultural anthropology and sociology. It is well-known that the concept of political socialization is based on the basic concept of socialization which emerged simultaneously in those three disciplines in late 1930s (This dating is after due recognition to Durkheimian and Freudian preoccupation with the essential problem). Persistent search among researchers for a rewarding insight and an appropriate method has motivated them to seek cues and conclusion from these disciplines. There is an anticipation even that specialists on political socialization "will cultivate connections with specialists in the physical, biological and cultural realms". (Lasswell in Renshon, 1977, p. 462). The debates are expected to continue. More so, because sometimes unsettled questions in other disciplines are mistaken as answers to problems in political science research, and sometimes their solutions are not utilized by political scientists. It may be worthwhile to look into a few of these debates.

The model of political socializee has been of focal interest in political socialization research. The initial one, implicit in Hyman's work (Hyman, 1959), poses the political socializee as a passive learner inducted in a political culture. He is further conceived to be modifying himself to respond to the demands of the political system. Hyman argued :

> "The continuity in such patterns (of adult political behaviour) over time and place suggests that the individual has

> been *modified* in the course of his development in such a way
> that he is likely to exhibit certain persistent behavior apart
> from transient stimulation in his contemporary environ-
> ment ... " (author's emphasis) (Hyman, 1959, pp. 17-18).

This passive reactive model remains the most prevalent in research.
The assumption of *tabula rasa* has been used by many (Hess and
Torney, 1967 ; Easton and Dennis, 1969 ; Dennis, 1973, pp. 18-21 ;
Sigel, 1975 ; Renshon, 1977, pp. 16-22). Against this an alternative
model has been put forward. It projects the political socializee as
an individual who expresses himself and seeks to meet his own
"idiosyncratic needs and values in his own way". (Sears in Green-
stein and Polsby, 1975, p. 95) ; or, who tries to "seek out and avoid,
perceive and misperceive, accept and reject the agencies' values".
(Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975, p. 8). The emphasis is on assimila-
tive and interactional rather than accomodative and transactional
nature of the process. It is also possible that the maturing citizen
assimilates political learning to a pre-political ideology or "a non-
verbally acquired, therefore, pre-existing Weltanshauung integral to
his personality". (Kuntson, 1974, pp. 7-40). Use of such a model, it
is hoped, will help researchers develop a more dynamic conceptuali-
zation and a more precise explanation of the process (Schwartz and
Schwartz, 1975, p. 9). Further, it will allow researchers to contex-
tualize the political socialization process. As Schwartz and Schwartz
argue :

> "To ignore the fact that people's attitude and behavior are
> influenced by puberty, getting married, having children
> getting a job or having a health trauma is to allow our
> studies to remain divorced from the salient, engaging stuff of
> life that motivates so much human behavior" (Schwartz and
> Schwartz, 1975, p. 10).

The two different models project the process of political learning
in two different ways. The pursuit of the first usually leads to greater
emphasis on agency role and a commitment to an understanding of
the process as 'enculturation', 'indoctrination', 'induction' or 'incul-
cation' ; that of the other, to 'internalization', 'adaptation', 'adjust-
ment', 'absorption' or 'acquisition' by the learner (Dennis, 1973,
p. 20). The role of various agents has received more and continuing

attention as in indicated by the organization of content in the leading volumes (Dawson and Prewitt, 1969 ; Dennis, 1973 ; Renshon, 1977) as well as in important early researches (Greenstein, 1965 ; Hess and Torney, 1967) (for a review of work on agents, see Beck in Renshon, 1977, pp. 115-141).

The two models of political socializee are related to competing approaches in psychology of learning and developmental theory. A 'passive-learner' concept of political socializee is rooted in the observational or vicarious learning approach. (Bandura in Goslin, 1969). It can take place through among other processes, modelling, imitation and identification. The assumption is that an individual, particularly a young one, learns by observing others belonging to his immediate and intimate relations, usually members of his family. Each of the processes is complex in which asymmetrical power relationship, for example, between a parent and a child, and the affective structure of relations enter. It can characterize political socialization under any kind of group though family is usually projected as the key situation for such learning. Works on children's political orientation by Greenstein and by Easton and Hess are based on implicit recognition of role of imitative learning. Jennings and Niemi's research on adolescents also subscribes to this approach. (Jennings and Niemi, 1974) (For a brief statement on imitation and identification see Sigel, pp. 6-8 ; for a comprehensive exposition of methods of political learning, see Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, Chap. V ; for comment on relative underdevelopment of research on learning process, See Dennis, 1973, p. 287). It is easily recognized that "observational" approach does not completely ignore the role of agents because agents, particularly parents, in most cases, provide the only available model for children. Even in case of a grown-up learner there can be a dominant model. We argue that a model for the learner may be just there without an activist intervention of someone or some institution but still associated with him or it.

The other model of political socializee which visualizes him as an active and creative learner is based on cognitive theory (Connell, 1971 ; Brown, 1965). It does not conceive him simply as a *tabula rasa.* Such a model helps explain discontinuities in political socialization. Admittedly there can be other sources of discontinuity

(Dawson and Preewitt, 1969, Chap. VI,) (for a survey of various learning theories used by political scientists, see Rohter in Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975, pp. 129-132 ; Jennings and Niemi, 1974, pp. 15-23 ; Jaros, 1973, pp. 142-143 ; for a brief statement of learning principles, see Sigel, 1970, pp. 4-7 ; Jaros, 1973, pp. 143-146).

Exclusive reliance on either of the models or approches has been considered by some as unwise (Jennings and Niemi, 1974, pp. 20-22). Piaget's theory of intellectual development which identifies three interrelated processes of assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium, possibly offers an opportunity to take into account both. It may be rewarding to assume that "each individual's development of an understanding of political phenomena will follow a natural progression whose sequence and content will be dictated by the experience that his interpersonal world provides him as this experience is organized by his evolving cognitive capacities." (Rosenau in Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975, p. 174 ; see also Merelman in Dennis, 1973, pp. 289-319 ; Connell, 1971 ; Knutson in Niemi and Associates, 1974, p. 8).

A second debate concerns the issue of how to conceive the relationship between the process of political socialization and change in its environment. Research in this area however remains underdeveloped. As Roberta S. Sigel and Marilyn Brookes observe : "Information on the impact of historical events on youth's political thinking and on the interaction of the changing individual with the changing system ... is very sparse." (Sigel and Brookes in Niemi and Associates, 1974, p. 103). The initial conceptual model of political socialization assumed a rather uninterrupted transmission of political orientation intact across generations. It was based on an initial assumption of minimal external change (Sigel, 1970, p. 589). An example of use of such a model can be drawn from Hyman's pioneering work, while conceding that a changing social environment enters into political learning process, he draws attention to the "overwhelming resemblance between most parents and most children demonstrated in a variety of studies, despite the obvious fact that the world is ever-changing ..." (Hyman, 1959, p. 98). That is, he advises only a modest acceptance of the argument that a changing environment can affect political socialization. "The susceptibility to

this influence (of social change)", he argues, "may not be universal or may be constrained in many cases by other factors". (Ibid). The young child does not develop capacity to interpret social change. It is the parents who do it for him thus creating continuity in learning. Sometimes "parents become unusually receptive to change precisely to facilitate the adjustment of their own children to a new and future world". (*Ibid.*, p. 101).

Subsequent thinking has sought to develop a different understanding. It is felt that social change can affect the process of political socialization in diverse ways. In an early recognition of the relevance of social change Hess even questioned the significant usefulness of the concept in a situation of rapid social change :

> "Since it assumes stability and consensus in the adult population, *political* socialization is a concept which is difficult to apply to the process of political learning during periods of rapid social change and of often conflict between major segments of a society." (author's emphasis) (Hess, 1968, p. 528).

That Hess characterized his observation "polemical" would suggest that he was trying to dispute one major assumption of political socialization research. Recognition of relevance of change has come mainly in course of locating limits to childhood or early political socialization. Dawson and Prewitt have introduced the notion of "discontinuity" which points to cases "when orientations acquired are not congruent with the realities of political life". (Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, p. 81 ; see also Jaros, 1973, Chap. 3). As one of the sources of discontinuity they have identified political change, i.e., change in the structure and processes of government itself :

> "Differences between the rates and substance of change in political systems and in political culture are a major source of discontinuity in the development of political orientations". (Ibid., p. 95)

One notes however the marginal character of the recognition by the authors. Further, this is an outgrowth of an understanding of political socialization as a life-long process. As a sample of the

essential observation in this regard we may refer to Jaros' observation :

> "...socialization may be a continuous process extending throughout the life cycle. This raises the possibility that early socialization may be displaced or overriden by later socialization, nullified by adult experiences or even by deliberate counter-socialization". (Jaros, 1973, p. 57).

A more comprehensive effort in bringing in social change as a limiting condition on political socialization is by Sigel (Sigel, 1970, pp. 589-595). But the analysis is mainly devoted to location of sources of change rather than making specific reference to empirically tested relation between change and socialization. It is based mainly on observations on non-western societies (Inkeles, and Prewitt assisted by Okello-Oculi in Sigel, 1970, pp. 596-621 ; Jaros, 1973, pp. 65-66). Observations in most cases remain impressionistic formulations as in Jennings and Niemi's work : "Instead of thinking of socialization leading to change, we can visualize wide-scale institutional change leading to changing socialization process ..." (Jennings and Niemi, 1974, p. 6 ; for a specific observation on change in formal education and political socialization in Israel, see Etzioni-Halevy with Shapira, 1977, p. 55).

A third debate we propose to refer here is about ideological inclination in exercises on theory-building (Easton and Dennis, 1969). Easton and Dennis have raised a question which has become well-known : "What part, if any, does socialization play in enabling a political system to persist, even in the face of a variety of stresses and strains on the essential system variables to which most systems are exposed ?" (Easton and Dennis, 1969, p. 51). While recognizing the necessity of careful research in pursuit of an answer to this central question, the authors maintain that a vital part is played by socialization in enabling some kind of political system to persist (for a recognition of problem of establishing links between political socialization and political system see Dennis, 1973, p. 30 ; Renshon, 1977, p. 7). This it does by building up diffuse support and by taking care of system stress, for example, by helping citizens to internalize a need to comply or a degree of self-restraint in placing demands to the political system (for a system-maintenance perspective

on political socialization, see Almond and Coleman, 1960, p. 27 ; for a brief review of researches with the system perspective, see Dennis, 1973, pp. 5-7, pp. 29-32). It is also conceivable, the authors argue, that under some conditions socialization may aggravate rather than ameliorate stress, and that it might have contributed to the destruction of some political systems (See also, for similar observation, Jennings and Niemi, 1974, p. 6). They insist that there is no built-in conservative bias in system analysis. Based on a review of research Stacey asserts :

> "The study of political socialization has encompassed stabi-
> lity and change, continuity and discontinuity, national
> independence movements, demonstrations, protest and
> rebellion, violence and terrorism. The results of such study
> have yielded implication for radicals of all kinds as much
> as for conservatives, and the critics who complain of conser-
> vative assumptions fail to perceive political socialization is
> (and must be) consistent with change, even radical change."
> (Stacey, 1978, p. 149).

There are other scholars who dispute the openness in approach to political socialization from systems-persistence perspective. Knutson, for example, draws our attention to the fact that political socialization studies began with inherent conservative bias under Plato and Aristotle as well as under behaviouralism. This is indicated by the dominant model in political socialization studies. This is one of "successive approximations, in which the individual's development increasingly approximates the needs of the political system." (Knutson in Niemi and Associates, 1974, p. 7 ; for similar observation, see also Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975, p. 5). Nathan and Remy point out the abstract character of notion of political system in system-persistence theory and argue that "change appears swallowed up in a theory which is pitched at a sufficiently high level of abstraction that it loses empirical referents and hence can explain everything." (Nathan and Remy in Renshon, 1977, p. 89).

A conservative bias in mainstream political socialization research has been located and criticized from a new left point of view which has Gramsci's concept of hegemony at its core (Miliband, 1973, Chaps. 7 and 8 ; see also Litt, 1969). It seeks to expose the role of

state along with various other agencies in contemporary advanced capitalist political systems of western Europe and north America in massive indoctrination directed towards "engineering of consent." A relative decline in use of systematic repression by state has been compensated by pervasive but subtle political socialization of citizens. Miliband points out :

> "that the liberal and constitutional state ... has come to play a *much* more important part than previously in the process of 'political socialization' and that just as it now intervenes massively in economic life so does it also intervene very notably, in a multitude of different ways, in ideological competition, and has in fact become one of the main architects of conservative consensus." (author's emphasis) (Miliband, 1973, p. 165).

Miliband's observation has an added importance in the context of evident neglect of state as an agent of political socialization.

The political implications of systems approach of Easton and Dennis despite endeavour to couch it in neutral terms hurt democratic political theory also (Renshon, 1977, pp. 40-44). Political socialization which reduces stress on a political system by educating individuals in the need to comply, disables them to continually question authority and to examine bases of obligation of compliance. An authoritative definition of illegitimate demands as a measure to reduce the flow of demands into a political system may turn out to be an authoritarian definition.

(3)

The imperatives of comparative political analysis embracing the newly independent nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America justify, it is usually mentioned, the use of the concept of political socialization. (Almond and Coleman, 1960, p. 3, Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, p. 3, Jaros, 1973, p. 18). Proposing a functional approach to comparative politics Almond argued for the necessity to compare the political systems of the "developing areas" according to a common set of categories. The necessity derived in a major way from the American interest in the 'third world'. (Almond, 1956, p. 391)

(for comparative political socialization research on mainly western liberal-democratic political systems see Nathan and Remy in Renshon (1977, pp. 90-97). 'Political Socialization' is one of these. For Almond it was to be an experimental use. Since then either directly or indirectly the concept has been used to study aspects of political process in the 'third world' though evidently the western political systems and mainly the American, have received the major research attention (Prewitt and Okello-Oculi in Sigel, 1970, p. 614). In a somewhat literary observation on a decade's experience with the concept of Hyman pointed out : "New investigators are freer to roam the world, picking whatever country or set of countries strikes their fancy and measuring whatever dimensions of behaviour they choose in whatever type of population seems fruitful to them" (Hyman in 1969, Preface, p. vii). We may note that the concept has been used to understand political process in socialist political systems where the western researchers have not really succeeded in 'roaming about'. They have relied in most cases on secondary date, like official reports, refugees' recollections and debriefings of defectors. There are the normal barriers of culture, history and politics. To these one can add social sciences' limited capacity to understand man. Dennis H. Wrong once characterised man as "that plausible creature whose wagging tongue so often hides the despair and darkness in his heart" (Wrong, 1961, p. 193). Judging by the marginal number of researches on political socialization in non-western political systems (Nathan and Remy in Renshon, 1977, p. 1001 ; Sears in Greenstein and Polsby, 1975, p. 112) and by the problems of collection of primary data, the area remains largely uncharted. Comparisons between western liberal-democratic political systems and socialist and 'developing' political systems in ex-colonial countries as well as among the latter are virtually impossible because of fragmentary nature of evidence, variation in samples, differences in research design etc.

However, any attempt to look at the 'other culture' through categories developed in one's own is inherently comparative. The non-western political process has been examined in most cases by western political scientists. In some cases they have reflected on the character of a non-western political socialization process on the basis of comparative data (Volgyes, 1975 ; Krauss, 1974 ; Kuroda,

1965). It is worthwhile to enquire what new emphases have been called for by the experiences of application of the concept to non-western political systems.

The socialist political systems present an obvious contrast to the western liberal-democratic systems. If one would examine the principal methods of political socialization identified by researchers (Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, Chap. V), one is very likely to feel that a good part of it just happens ; for example, a political socializee makes an inter-personal transference of predisposition to authority, or a pre-political learning turns out to be of relevance later in political behaviour, or a political socializee imitates some one close to him, or experiences in politics and society generally condition development of political orientation. It is unlikely that the average political actor has the necessary intelligence, aptitude and training to connect up his pre-political and non-political experiences with his behaviour in politics. 'Political education' is the only method which has a relatively greater chance of being recognized as such by the average grown-up political socializee. Even then, there are covert methods of political education. In any case political education thus understood has not figured much in the major research works which have fetched the concept a reasonable reputation. One assumes that researches so far undertaken have grasped the essential character of political socialization in the liberal democratic systems as revealed through the major methods. Precisely at this level, the socialist political systems differ from their western counterparts. It is far from suggesting that the indirect methods do not operate there ; they probably do. But what stands out is the deliberate, persistent, comprehensive and elite-directed political socialization of citizenry which, if does not exhaust, dominates the total political socialization process. It is based on a manifest system of reward and punishment which has a distinctive immediacy. For the political socializee it is both easy and urgent to recognize intentions and policy-content of official political socialization. One has to remember that historically a new kind of ruling party has been trying to cope with the problems of speeding up a revolution in the minds of ordinary men. One feels also that it is worthwhile to examine how the European bourgeois leadership had grappled with similar problems. A rich variety of data possibly lie shunned out

there due to the a-historical bias of mainstream political socialization research.

It is a normal question to ask what kinds of processes, structures and their consequences in the socialist political systems have been located with the help of the concept and whether the concept in the process has gained an extension in meaning and in applicability. Researches explicitly using the political socialization process as the focal one are very few (Fagen, 1969 ; Volgyes, 1975 ; Carry, 1974 ; Clawson, 1973). There are some studies in which the process is one aspect of study or 'direct use of the concept has not been made (Mueller, 1973, pp. 34-42 ; White, 1979, pp. 64-83 ; Brown and Gray, 1979 ; Solomon, 1974, Liu, 1976, pp. 17-40). Between them these works cover the Soviet, the East European, the Latin American and the Asian socialist systems or their representative cases.

The common assumption backed up by some research is that the political socialization process in the socialist political systems is vastly different from that in the western liberal democratic systems. Based on research findings on the East European political systems Volgyes has observed : "...only the skeleton of the socialization process appeared to be the same ; the content, the flesh and blood, as well as the brain of the body under scrutiny, was entirely different." (Volgyes 1975, p. vii). Obviously there is no suggestion that it is impossible to apply the concept to such a political system. On the contrary it is implied that the assumptive framework in political socialization analysis based on the western data requires an extension.

The relevance of political socialization for the political system has been of central interest among western students of political socialization. The contribution of the process toward maintenance and/or persistence of the political system is taken for granted by some researchers while it is posed as a problem by some other researchers. This is true despite Easton's assertion that his notion of persistence includes change when necessary for persistence. It would be naive to assume that the relevance of political socialization for the persistence of the political system is not noted by the ruling class and its party in the socialist political system. Indeed the problem of persistence is more pressing than in the western liberal

democracies. However, an assumption that it is persistence only
that is sought to be secured official political socialization would be
an impediment to investigation. One feels that there is a strong
probability that such an assumption would unduly simplify the
problems of development of a political system whose regime norms
are sharply different from those of an erstwhile regime. That persis-
tence and stability of such a system are contingent more on altering
a political culture with deep roots in habits of thinking than on a
routine process of 'knitting' every emergent political man into an
already formed and secured pattern of culture. Fagen's comments
on Cuba is noteworthy :

> "Political socialization under the Revolutionary Government
> has not been used primarily for setting citizens in an on-
> going system. It has been a directed learning process
> through which the elite seeks to create a new political culture
> ... the process is very different from socialization in more
> settled and institutionalized systems whatever the political
> coloration. In Cuba there has been a planned attack on
> the cultural fabric itself." (Fagen, 1969, p. 6 ; for similar
> observation regarding political socialization in other socialist
> systems, see White, 1979, p. 65, Solomon, 1971, p. 6 ;
> Volgyes, 1975, p. 3).

It is not that information on political process in the socialist system
has alone sensitized researchers to the transforming and creative role
of political socialization. But certainly it has introduced a new
urgency. Lest Fagen's observation on Cuba would be misinter-
preted to mean that the planned attack is on the entire antecedent
culture, it should be mentioned that in many cases the socialist elite
actually makes selective use of it.

The transformative-creative role of official political socialization
involves de-socialization and re-socialization of individuals. There
is logical difficulty in applying the imagery of a 'two-stage' process.
It is highly probable that these are simultaneous operations, share
the same structured argument, and are backed up by the same
'reward-punishment' response from the elite-political socializer.
Such 'two-in-one' political socialization process is characteristic of
societies going through rapid and elite-directed change. Evidently

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it engages in bringing about congruent transformations in political self. Here again the encounter with the socialist political system has been fruitful. It provides empirical referents to "re-socialization", what in western political science is recognized as a marginal dimension.. It further gives a new urgency to study of adult political socialization, again, a relatively neglected field of study so far. (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1975, pp. 3-25 ; Sigel and Hoskin in Renshon, 1977, pp. 259-293). Political socialization in the socialist political system is not exclusively an adult-to-adult political socialization ; it is also an adult-to-child political socialization. But it is the former which lends some distinctive character to political socialization under socialism. It is possible that the models of adult political socialization used in current research on the western liberal-democratic systems will be inadequate to understand the same phenomenon in a post-ravolutionary society. Because they either treat adult political socialization as entirely conditioned by childhood political socialization, or make it contingent on inadequacy or failure of early and anticipatory political socialization, or project it as a manifestation of generational change. Only the second position can provide a premise for a possible model to be applied to adult political socialization in the contemporary socialist system.

The process of political socialization has two phases corresponding to two phases in the development of a socialist political system. In the immediate aftermath of revolution it has, usually two goals : one, making people discontinue pursuit of those traditional values which might preempt the emergent radical values, and the other stimulating in individuals at least a superficial sense of loyalty to the regime. This revolutionary socialization of the grown-up members of political community is gradually followed by re-socialization for continuity. Somewhat subtle, this resembles the usual type of adult political socialization. It intends to bring about de-politicisation of public life and a reduction in political participation by citizens in an apparent attempt to ensure system maintenance. Two observations are necessary here. First, such an understanding of the process of official political socialization is based mainly on an estimate of governmental and party activities rather than on data which demonstrate a causal link between these activities and citizens' political orientation and participation. It helps to locate at most an

enormous control by the government over the process of political learning. Secondly, we should guard against ready generalization regarding political socialization in the socialist political system. We must not deprive ourselves of data on differences between the socialist political systems. So far comparisons have been very few and mainly impressionistic (as example, see Brown and Wightman in Brown and Gray, 1979, p. 177). With examples of Great Leap Forward and Great Prolotarian Cultural Revolution in China in our mind, we may be right in thinking that the process of political socialization in the Asian socialist system is different from that in the Soviet Union and the East European countries.

It is not only the processual peculiarities in the socialist system which demand a shift in the usual way of looking at it. The structures or agents which act as political socializer or oversee the process as well as the techniques used suggest that researchers should be prepared to revise their standard understanding of relative efficacy of different agents of political socialization.

In the socialist system the structures which manifestly engage in political socialization of citizens in the dominant political culture are all deliberately instituted. They operate in a co-ordinated way rather than in a random manner. Such coordination is not unique to the socialist political system. But it has a certain distinctiveness in that it is deliberately effected within a short span of time. Only historical research can establish whether the first phase of liberal democracy in western Europe was also characterized by such engineered coordination details of which is now lost in what passes for a historical consensus. There is also a hierarchy which governs their interrelation. It implies that a vertical socialization in which socializing instructions and cues flow from the socializer to the socializee interlocks with a horizontal socialization in which a certain socializing agent, say, party, socializes another agent, for example, a peer group. If one has the amount and intensity of socializing effort in mind then it is rather rash to designate any of the structures like party, youth groups and trade unions, as secondary structures as one would tend to do if one is guided by trends in research on liberal-democratic systems. For the new generation of citizens these may as well be primary since their core political

self is likely to be formed under their dominant influence. Obviously, probing empirical research is necessary before we can confirm the impressions. Researchers (Volgyes, 1975) have so far identified the various agents from among the informal structures like family, peer group and church and the formal structures like party, youth groups, schools, trade unions, military, and the media. In some studies (e.g. Solomon, 1971), even a single personality like Mao has been projected as the dominant political socializer. Evidently the western scholars do not locate family as the primary socializer in the socialist system. The preeminence of the ruling party in the one party socialist system may have prompted such a devaluation of family. May be there is need for some caution. One conjecture is that some families to the extent they socialize their young in the kind of politics prescribed or preferred by the ruling party, operate as an appendage to official agents of political socialization ; to the extent some of them do not they compete with the latter, sometimes on manifestly unequal terms. But it would be unscientific to discount family's influence on the formation of political self in the young members. We can consider a Czech situation. The failure of persistent attempts by the communist leardership to erase from the minds of the people the sense of loyalty to Thomas Masaryk, the founder and first President of the country and a Christian humanist with social democratic values has been reported. This is considered to be due to Czech and Slovak families' continued inculcation of loyalty to the man and his principles in their children. (Brown and Wightman in Brown and Gray, 1979, pp. 176-178). We may briefly note that the western socialization theory recognizes that contradictory indirect socialization can seriously undermine direct political socialization (Prewitt and Okello Oculi in Sigel, 1970, p. 616). At a somewhat general level the scholarly conjecture is that family's role in political socialization is "complicated by the multiplicity of differing national cultures and national attitudes, differing levels of social and educational development, separate and divergent attitudes towards authority." (Volgyes, 1975, p. 5). Both point toward a role of family in political socialization process in the socialist political system.

Technique of political socialization is a crucial element in the total process. It reveals the character of the operative aspect of

political socialization. While the broad methods have been identified there is hardly any attempt to locate techniques in political socialization process in the western democratic political system. May be, it is so because of all the components of the process, it is difficult to gather data on techniques. Since governmental institutions have not been analysed as agents of political socialization there is naturally no analysis also of techniques employed by such institutions in the western democratic political systems. The assumption that the core political self is formed by the time an individual begins to interact with the governmental institutions probably explains this lack of concern. But in researches on the socialist political system western scholars have given a special attention to techniques employed by governmental and political institutions.

In the socialist political system the predominant institutions of the government and party initiate a process of political education of the masses. The manifest and programmatic character of mass political education by such structures makes location of techniques easier. We refer here to some techniques knowledge of which is gleaned from various general studies on some socialist political systems (White, 1979 ; Fagen, 1969 ; Muellar, 1973 ; Liu, 1976).

Language is evidently an important element in any socialization process. It is central to process of communication on which socialization is vitally dependent. "Language can be understood as a cultural and political guidance system into which values handed down from the past are deposited" (Mueller, 1973, p. 18). Hence by manipulating language, thus distorting communication, it is possible to direct the citizens to only one kind of norms and values — which establish legitimacy and promote stability of the regime. In the early years of the socialist East Germany, language — particularly expressions relating to politics and economics — was adapted to the socialist ideology. Elimination of terms and definitions of Fascist origin, coining new words derived from terms such as peace, youth, and socialism, refinement of important political terms, heavy use of typifications and negativisms, formalization of styles — all combined to bring about a language revolution (Mueller, 1973, pp. 34-42). Evidently such a transformation was based on the Marxist understanding of role language in radical transformation of mind and society,

and was not unique to East German socialism alone. But system-specific styles of politics can condition language reform which otherwise resembles such reform in other socialist system. For example, a language of dualities was introduced in socialist China reflecting a dual approach to civility, i.e., aggression against certain domestic outgroups and friendliness to some ingroups. The leadership introduced words "savoring of astringency or bitterness or suggesting threat or passionately cruel impulse" as well as words "of soothing cheer, promise and warmth in order to produce the picture of a splendid prospect and induce action of another type". Liu, 1976, pp. 17-40).

The technique of linguistic reform has a complementary technique in mass campaign for literacy and education. An examination of the Cuban experiment reveals some aspects of the latter. First, some new structures like the Committees for Defense of the Revolution and the Schools for Revolutionary Instruction were introduced to institutionalize the application of the technique over time. Secondly, legions of school children and young people were inducted as part of Conrado Benitez Brigades to teach in the remote parts of the country and among the poor. Thirdly, the new instruction manual, Alfabelicemos, used in teaching, contained twenty-four themes of revolutionary orientation (Fagen, 1969, p. 39). It would not be incorrect to presume that many other techniques are in use in the socialist political systems, and that despite a core similarity in organizational character and purpose, the techniques differ due to peculiarities of national culture and the stage in the evolution of the socialist political system concerned. The predominant position of the authoritative — many would even characterise them as 'authoritarian' — organizations, the inherent vitality of the techniques which operate at the level of a basic human need, namely, acquisition of language, need to lead to a belief that official political socialization in the socialist political system is destined to be always and instantaneously successful. The prediction in western political socialization theory is that "the more self-conscious the instruction, the less likely is it to succeed" (Prewitt and Okello-Oculi in Sigel, 1970, p. 616). In fact some researchers have pointed out its limitations and lack of comprehensive success. It may be, as in case of

Hungary, the failure of government to inculcate trust in the citizens :

> "The distrust for authority, the refusal to take anything at face value, the feeling that all statements emanating from the system, the schools included, had to be proved before they were accepted .have in no way been eradicated."
> (Schöpflin in Brown and Gray, 1979, p. 138).

It may be, as in case of Czechoslovakia, the failure of the government to efface pre-revolutionary commitment to social democratic values (Brown and Wightman in Brown and Gray, 1979, pp. 176-178). It may be, as in the case of Yugoslavia, the failure of various government controlled secondary structures to socialize the young people to the self-management system (Dyker in Brown and Gray, 1979, pp. 83-86). Obviously more examples can be cited. We propose that the socialist political system offers a new perspective for the study of dominant political socialization process.

Political socialization process in newly independent countries which have adopted the western liberal democratic political model at most approximates that in the socialist political system. Such an understanding is obviously based on impressions rather than on investigations which are very few. Considering the relative absence of constraints on data collection in this non-socialist political systems, one is surprised to find only a few probing enquiries about the nature of the political socialization process in these political systems. It is common knowledge that there are differences among them on the points of character of culture including religion, of level of industrial growth, of evolution of political institutions prior to and during colonial period of the intensity and comprehensiveness of colonial rule and of movements against it, and of the country's contemporary position in international politics. It is logical to assume that these factors would condition the process of political socialization in the non-socialist political systems of the 'third world'.

There are a few works which enquire into the political socialization process — in some cases as part of a broader framework of analysis (Almond and Coleman, 1960) and.in some others as the

major object of study.   In the first kind, a broad regional overviews
on the process have been put forward.   The latter comprises mainly
of specific country studies, countries sometimes being chosen as
samples and studies being underlined by some general concern like
nation-building (e. g., Prewitt and Okello-Oculi in Sigel, 1970,
pp. 607-621).   The Japanese political system has received relatively
significant attention (Krauss, 1974 ; Kuroda, 1965 ; Okamura, 1968 ;
Richardson, 1974).   There are also studies on Indonesia (Holt, 1972),
Israel (Etzioni-Halevy and Shapira, 1977), Turkey (Frey, 1968), three
South American countries of Chile, Argentina and Venezuela (Stin-
chcombe, 1968), Jamaica (Langton, 1966), three African countries of
Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (Koff, Muhll and Prewitt in Dennis,
1973, pp. 231-253), and India (Kothari, 1970 ; Nageshwar Prasad,
1980, Weiner, 1969 ; Eldersveld and Ahmed, 1978, Gupta, 1975 ;
Nandy, 1980).   Reference to the character of the process in stateless
societies (Levine in Sigel, 1970, pp. 535-539) is also be available.
In a few of these studies (e.g. Richardson, 1974) the concept of
political socialization has not been explicitly used. We have also
to note the limitations of data, usually acknowledged by the resear-
chers, and the fact that most of these studies have not been followed
up by further research.   As in the case of studies on the socialist
systems there is no attempt in each case to seriously re-examine the
concept on the basis of information regarding the process in the
non-western, non-socialist political systems.   Even then, we feel,
these studies are useful.

These studies suggest that the data located can sensitize the cul-
ture-bound western theory to the problems of political learning under
conditions, to specify a few, of political instability including break-
down of regimes, of lack of firm direction in social and economic
development, of fragmentation of political culture, and, of various
agents of political socialization operating without being orchestrated.
One does not have to emphasize that all the factors do not combine
in each case.   We would like to argue that an examination of the
process at the political socializee's end rather than that of the political
socializer will be appropriate.   Because there have been at best
sporadic attempts by the elite, particularly when its legitimacy has
become vulnerable, to socialize the citizens to politics.   Since more
often than not coercive or repressive measures accompany such

sudden spells of political education generating or reviving political culture of dissent, political education loses its identity in the perception of the citizenty or is interpreted as an attempt at socialization to political submission. Under conditions of relative security for the elite, efforts at political education are occasioned by ceremonies in political life of the community, or, by periodic rush for electoral support — when the difference between socialization and mobilization becomes very thin. Obviously official political socialization does not exhaust direct and deliberate political socialization — even when there is a ban on organized opposition. But in most cases political socialization by competing elites shares the character of official political socialization unless such competing elites have a well-defined ideology. An approach to political socialization from the political socializee's end is likely to make location of the agents easier. It is also very relevant to an understanding of the process to know whom or which institution the political socializee recognizes as his political socializer. Besides we are likely to come to know the socializee's 'world' that intervenes between the socializing instructions, cues and influences and his responses to them. This 'world' in many cases retains an autonomy from the few national political institutions which take time to spread its roots.

The three studies on the Japanese individuals (Krauss, 1974 ; Okamura, 1968 ; Kuroda, 1965) using the concept of political socialization are all based on a recognition of very significant political changes in post-war Japan. It has been characterised as "political socialization of upheavels", one attendant phenomenon being co-existence of "fragmented generations" without adequate communication between them (Okamura, 1968, p. 567). While there is some stability in the post-war period and a rapid democratization has taken place, doubts about their continuity are expressed (Krauss, 1974, p. 169 ; Richardson, 1974, f.n. 17, p. 244). In between them the studies explore the youth (Krauss, 1974) as well as the children (Okamura, 1968), the radicals (Krauss, 1974) as well as the emergent elite (Kuroda, 1965). The studies differ in depth of analysis. But they still together cover a range of data and problems without consciously being parts of a common programme of analysis. Together they offer ideas on the process of political socialization in a political situation which marks major discontinuity in political arrangements

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and values, and is itself underlined by apprehensions of being discontinued in future. Since the time the concept of political socialization has gained currency in western academic political analysis, the political systems which by trends in their development have justified its use, have not gone through radical changes in regime. A reckonable number of new socialist political systems have emerged constituting definite breaks from the past as far as the character of regime is concerned. But despite periodic crises in a few of these, the systems are not under any threat of an imminent change. The post-war Japanese political system, however, offers studies on political socialization a context different from both.

The focal concern of Krauss's study is the discontinuity in political behaviour of young Japanese left radical activists of 1960s. It is common knowledge that similar development characterises many radical movement in the third world (See Hobsbawm, 1973, p. 263). Krauss has attempted to investigate into the relationship between adult and earlier political learning. Events and changes in the political and social systems as they impinge directly on the political socializee and become important as intervening social agencies in influencing the development of his beliefs and behaviour have been examined. It is true that political socialization researches on the basis of data from western liberal political systems acknowledge that political socialization is a life-long process, and thereby, that there can be discontinuities in the learning process (Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, Chap. VI). In fact the Krauss' study was stimulated by these assumptions as well as by the competing models of 'maturation' and 'generation' as approaches to the problem of persistence in behaviour. But the longitudinal pursuit of the Japanese radicals by Krauss yields data and reflections which rescue the assumption from a secondary status. The study establishes that the concept of political socialization can be applied to understand the behaviour of political radicals. With the exception of a study on the genesis of right radicalism in members of the John Birch Society in America (Rohter in Sigel, 1970, pp. 626-651), the major direction of political socialization research has been away from exploration of any kind of radicalism. May be, it is because such groups are of marginal importance in the American political system. Though Krauss probed into 53 activists, the Ampo generation of student

activists to whom they belonged had become household names in Japan and were forerunners of the Japanese new left. Further, the study points to the necessity of a model more dynamic than is usually followed in static cross-sectional approach to political socialization. Such a dynamic model should consider relations between stages of political learning as independent variables. So that it is possible to reveal the dynamics of development of political self which embraces continuities as well as discontinuities. A study merely of content of political learning of separate stages usually thwarts such an understanding. As for discontinuities in political socialization the Krauss study argues that these need not always be at the same point in different cultures, and these instead of threatening stability of a political system may contribute positively to the same. Despite caveats being thrown in from time to time, the assumption of family of orientation playing a dominant role in political socialization is still retained in western research. The Krauss study feels that greater attention must be paid to peer groups and even to child's direct interaction with society and political events "operating", as socializing agents. The need to turn to socialization agencies in the wider environment is asserted in another study of the Japanese youth (Kuroda, 1965, p. 330) and in a generalist work on the Japanese political culture (Richardson, 1974, p. 241). One may recall the relative neglect of influence of environment in western research.

The usefulness of adopting an approach to the process of political socialization in transitional societies through the experiences of the political socializee is revealed in studies on the Turkish peasant (Frey, 1968) and on the members of the middle class in Chile, Argentina and Venezuela (Stinchcombe, 1968). In both the cases a wide variety of agents and experiences have been found involved in development of political orientation. Frey commenting on socialization to national identification among the Turkish peasants reports :

> "Those peasants with more cognitive flexibility probably acquired through greater exposure to change viz the mass media, attending school, becoming literate, and travelling away from home, seem to make the transition to national identification more readily, over and above the thrust

provided by specific communications directed at them ..."
(Frey, 1968, p. 964).

Stinchcombe demonstrates that elements of middle class individual's
political weltanshauung are rooted in different parts of his biography
like experiences in education, migration and occupation, and the
history and structure of political system an individual lives under.
The experiences in political learning by the Japanese radical, the
Turkish peasant and the South American middle class individual
point out that in transitional societies socializing agents are diffused
throughout social and political structure. The approach we propose
here can acquaint us about the relative efficacy of different agents
also. This has been demonstrated in a study on school students in
three East African countries (Koff, Muhll and Prewitt in Dennis,
1973, pp. 231-253).

The studies on political socialization in the non-socialist political
systems of the 'third world' suggest that the countries offer an intere-
sting chance to the researchers to examine the character of the
process in a situation of strong political sub-cultures which coexist
but do not always cohere. In the first decade of research, the poli-
tical sub-cultures in advanced industrial countries as they related to
the process of political socialization remained largely unexplored
(Dennis, 1973, p. 256). The issue received some attention subse-
quently. But even then a major share of research attention in
United States was directed towards "exotic" groups well beyond the
mainstream of American politics. Otherwise it has been the policy
issue of integration of blacks into the dominant political culture
(Renshon, 1977, p. 73). The salience of political sub-cultures for
political socialization in the non-socialist "third world", political
systems is presumably different. The tensions between dominant
traditional political sub-cultures instead of being reduced have been
more often than not accentuated by the political elite in the new
political systems. A fresh source of tension has been the attempt
by the elite to introduce a new political sub-culture, in most cases
that of the erstwhile colonial rulers, and project it immediately as
the only legitimate political culture delegitimising ethnic loyalties in
the process (Weiner in Pye and Verba, 1969, pp. 229-231). Some
new leaders did attempt to incorporate elements from tradition to

create, for example, national solidarity (Rothermund in Moore, 1979, pp. 191-197). We can cite the example of Indonesia and its leader, Sukarno. Geertz observes :

> "As heir to Polynesian, Indic, Islamic, Chinese and European traditions, it (Indonesia) probably has more hieratic symbols per square foot than any other large land expanse in the world, and moreover it had in Sukarno ... a man both wildly anxious and supremely equipped to assemble those symbols into a pan-doctrinal *Staatsreligion* for the new formed Republic." (authors' italics). (Geertz in Holt, p. 321).

But such endeavoures for assimilation have many a time become counter-productive in the new political systems. It is in the context of such sub-cultural tensions that the process of politcal socialization is to be understood. The process itself gets fragmented. Some political socialization is explicitly directed towards transmission of sub-culture only with an attitude of intolerance and hostility vis-a-vis relevant counter-sub-cultures. Some other political socialization seeks to inculcate political attitudes and values that not only cut across sub-cultures but try to forge alliance among them also. Lest contradictory political socialization be misunderstood as an attrite conflict exclusively between ideas and ideals concerning a range of political action, we may point out that conflict between non-ideational interests are basic to sub-cultural tensions. These generate political sub-cultures and direct streams of political socialization.

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THE MIDDLE CLASSES IN INDIAN SOCIETY*

DR. SWAPAN KUMAR PRAMANICK**

In analysing the problems of persistence and change of capitalist societies, the structure, position and the role of the middle classes must have to be taken into consideration. The workers and peasants, in their struggle for democracy and socialism, must ally with the middle classes. It is a historical truth that at times of revolutionary upheavels of a society, the attitude and role of the middle classes assume crucial significance. It is a fact that workers and peasants become the direct victims of the capitalist relations of production, but many other sections of people including the professionals, the intelligentsia, artisans and traders, the petite bourgeoisie — all of them are adversely affected by the exploitative economic order which we find in capitalism. Hence, while analysing the class structure of a given society, one must properly assess the role of the middle classes.

While analysing the role of middle classes in Indian society, one confronts two formidable difficulties. Firstly, the literature on middle classes is very scanty. Studies on the working class, the peasantry, caste, relations between caste & class are there. There are also a good number of researches on the professionals, the white collar workers, the intellectuals etc. But a comprehensive study on the middle classes in modern Indian society is yet to be made. B. B. Misra's *The Indian Middle Classes* provides a detailed historical background of the growth of the middle classes in India but the post-independent situation has escaped the attention of our scholars. This is somewhat puzzling in view of the fact that the middle classes

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were instrumental in bringing independence to our country and that in contemporary politics also they enjoy a very important role.

The second difficulty lies in determining the exact boundaries of the middle classes. How are we to define a middle class ? What should be the criterion ? Should it be such 'objective' criteria as income or profession ? Or should it be some subjective notion of status like 'identification' with the middle classes ? Or should it be the position of a particular group in the sphere of production relations representing the social mode of production ? Without doubt, the middle classes comprise of an enormously heterogeneous category representing people from different walks of life. As Lewis and Mande say, 'one middle class person may be the employer of another, the teacher of a third, the customer of a fourth, and the client or patient of a fifth.''[1]

In determining the boundaries of middle classes, western writers have generally put emphasis on the economic and the psychological/status factors. Occupation is also sometimes emphasized. Such statements as "The middle classes may seem the converse of the 'workers' in general" or "that varied section of the community that works with its brain rather than with its hands," are examples of the occupational criterion.[2] It is argued that with the development of capitalist society more and more people are working with their brains, leaving it to machines to do manual work. The rank of the middle class is swelling everyday with the progressive 'embourgeoisation' of the working class. This situation, it is said, is natural and irreversible and is to be found even in the socialist countries.

The problem of definition of middle classes is an extension of the problem of definition of class. There are many who tend to identify the class character of an individual primarily with reference to his 'feeling' or subjective identification with a class. Thus, it has been said 'A social class consist of a group of persons conscious of certain common traits and of certain common ways of behaviour which distinguish them from members of other social classes with other traits and other ways of behaviour" and "to be a member of a social class, an individual must both feel himself to be so and must be felt by others to be so."[3] Similar such definition of class was given by Centers, "A man's class is part of his ego, a feeling on his part of

belonging to something ; an identification with something larger than himself."

Again, social classes have been defined on the basis of income also. Social differentiation in modern societies is primarily based on income differentials. A man's prestige and status is largely related to his income. As he moves over from one income range to another, so it is argued, he crosses the boundaries of a class. As Misra says, "A difference of income produces a hierarchy of prestige and power according to variations in its size. It produces a qualitative change in the status of an individual or group only when it is converted into a form affecting relationship to property."[4] An industrial worker, if he is highly paid and is in possession of some luxury items, may well belong to middle or upper middle class. 'The Affluent Worker' theory thus presupposes that as a society flourishes more and more, the 'lower classes' are reduced in size and importance.

But most of the writers on class prefer to combine a number of indicators for class differentiation. Max Weber, accepted as the mentor of capitalist society, thus argued that stratification is based on three aspects — class, status and power. While class is determined on the size and source of income, status in determined on the basis of subjective estimates and power is based on proximity to political parties.[5] An individual's position in society is a cumulative product of these three aspects. Analysis of social stratification provides a fertile ground of social research as, in modern societies, all sorts of combination may be possible between these three variants.

Lewis and Mande's description of class is also based on this approach. As they hold "In deciding whether an individual belongs to a particular class, we must take into account a wide range of considerations, including income, occupation, accent, spending habits, residence, culture, leisure-pursuits, clothes, education, moral attitudes and relationship with other individuals".[6] In deciding a person's class position, then, a host of objective and subjective factors are taken into account. Also because within the middle classes there is wide internal differentiation in status, the word 'classes' is used instead of the word 'class'. Persons who would thus

constitute the middle classes are the professionals, businessmen, managers, teachers, intellectuals, govt. servants, shopkeepers, non-manual workers, farmers etc. The list is just illustrative.

The Marxian approach to the problem of class in general and of middle class in particular is quite different. The concept of class, according to Marx, refers to a social aggregate. The capitalists and the workers are important because they personify capital and wage labour. Whereas the bourgeois economists and sociologists view class as status groups, the Marxists view class from the standpoint of relations of people to property in the means of production. Distribution aspects such as amount of income are not unimportant but they are to be analysed in the context of the totality of production relations. Though in Marx's writings we do not find any precise 'definition' of class, Lenin's description of the essence of class has been accepted as most important. As he says "classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of aquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy."[1] Thus Lenin held that income is to be seen in connection with relations of property and production. The essence consists in the standing of a group in the mode of production, the production relations of a given society. Considered from this standpoint, there are two antagonistic classes in a capitalist society — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The production relation of this society place them in hostile relationship.

While the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are thus opposed to each other, there exist the middle classes which occupy an intermediary position. It refers to that whole social pyramid at the top of which stand the bourgeoisie and, at the bottom, the proletariat. Inspite of their many internal differences, there are many common elements which hold them together. It is their intermediate position. In the *Communist Manifesto,* Marx and Engels noted that as the

contradictions in the bourgeois society are sharpened, most of the middle class people are forced down to the level of the workers. The middle classes cannot remain independent of the antagonistic social relations. Increasing exploitation force them to join the ranks of the proletariat and support the cause of revolution. They provide the intellectual leadership which is necessary for the workers to arouse class-consciousness and thus help the workers to put an end to the bourgeois society.

Since Marx's writings, most of the western writers have tried to refute the Marxian theory of the role of middle classes in society. While it is not possible for us to discuss their arguments in details, we propose to present here only a few dominant trends of their criticism of Marxian analysis of class.

While analysing modern capitalist societies, many point out that capitalism is not facing any breakdown as prophesized by Marx. On the other hand by a spate of scientific and technological revolutions, it has increased production very much and is relieving more and more people from hard manual labour. As a result of that the 'proletariat' in the Marxist sense no longer exist today. They now own car, house, refrigerator, TV sets etc. They constitute the 'affluent' workers. As such, they have been converted into middle class. Karl Renner, who claimed to be a Marxist, pointed out that in developed capitalist societies, there are only two classes, the service class and the working class and that their relation is non-antagonistic.[8] R. Dahrendorf has also used such an approach as he sees the existence of four class groups in advanced capitalist countries, viz. the upper class, the service class, the subordinate class and the class of free intellectuals. In this scheme the capitalists and the workers both belong to the subordinate class. Naturally, in such a society, there does not exist any exploited class.[9] The industrially developed countries all provide for an open system where a man's fortune is built by his capabilities and merits. The trend is either to deny the existence of classes or if they are at all recognized, to reduce them into some psychological obsessions. As Deniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit point out "American Sociologists have discarded the very concepts of classes and class-struggle, substituting the theory by a continuous scale of increasing status."[10]

Another major argument against the Marxist approach has been that scientific and technological revolutions have made ideological issues irrelevant in modern times. Men, irrespective of whether they live under socialism or communism, have been subordinated to the need of machines and the need of organization. Burnharm, in his thesis on "The Managerial Revolution" has prophesized the absolute supremacy of managers and technicians in such a situation. This is nothing but a theory of the inevitable victory of the middle class. C. Wright Mills, another exponent of the Middle class theory, pointed out "In both the USA and the USSR, as the political order is enlarged and centralized, it becomes less political and more bureaucratic ; less the locale of a struggle than an object to be managed. Within both, most men are the objects of history, adapting to structural changes with which they have little or nothing to do."[11] So these writers talk about the coming of a 'post-industrial phase' where there is only rule by technocrats, bureaucrats and party-functionaries. Marcuse said, "the transition from capitalism to socialism appears, in spite of the revolution, still as quantitative change. The enslavement of man by the instruments of his labour continues in a highly rationalised and vastly efficient and promising form."[12]

So industrial societies, either capitalist or socialist, are characterized by machines on the one hand and men on the other. In between there are technicians and managers. Immense increase in production has benefited everybody and is gradually converting more and more people into the middle strata. In other words, it is so argued, all available indications go against Marx's analysis. The late French sociologist R. Aron has summed up the position thus : "all observers must acknowledge that the predictions of the Marxists with respect to the future of the capitalist regimes have come to grief for a very simple reason ; the very industrialization, and particularly, in the conditions of the regime of private property, gives many things which are worth protecting to a growing number of people ; it does not increase poverty, rather it expands the ranks of the middle classes and the conditions of life of the petty bourgeoisie have been provided for them."[13]

But do all these developments indicate the refutation of the Marxian theory regarding the basic class contradictions in a capitalist

society ? In dealing with class, Marx made it very clear in his 'Capital' 'individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class relations and class-interests.' The essence of capitalist system is in the sphere of production relations, in the rule of capital over wage-labour. Has the rule of capital ceased to exist ? Has the phenomenon of surplus value ceased to exist ? Capitalism survives on a type of relation where some persons appropriate the unpaid labour of others. The separation of the managerial from the owner-ship functions does not abolish capital. On the other hand, it helps to maximise that appropriation by a more 'scientific' management of the problem. The essence of a society lies in the social mode of production. Change in such mode initiates all other changes. Direc-tion of social change is conditioned basically by the struggle of classes. The argument that there has occurred a change in the social character of ownership of capital now as a result of diffusion of ownership by the distribution of shares and stocks among the people, is a big hoax. Only a small percentage of share is distributed among the people to create a sense of illusion among them. Effective power in big corporations and joint stock companies lies in the hands of a few big capitalists. A 1971 estimate shows that in the United States 0·2 per cent of Americans possessed 30 p c. of all stocks, and 1 per cent owned 50 per cent.[14]

The argument that class-polarisations and class-contradictions have ceased to exist now is not tenable either. It is true that in the developed capitalist countries workers are more affluent today but their capitalist masters are much more affluent. The productive force of society is fast developing and it is making the contradictions in production relations more sharp. Because they are producing much more, the list of demands of the workers has also increased. They increasingly realize that they are being deprived of the amenities and facilities to which they have been entitled by the growth of produc-tive forces by the operation of the rule of private capital. Alienation from labour is all the more sharp. And increasing concentration of capital is turning more and more people into wage-labourers. It is true that scientific and technological progress have reduced the pro-portion of unskilled and mannual workers at the aggregate worker level. But skilled labourers, service workers and all wage and

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salaried workers who are not owners and have no access to the
decision making process are parts of the category of an aggregate
worker. As it has been said, capital appropriates unpaid labour both
in the sphere of production and circulation and that workers
exploited by industrial capital cannot be separated from workers
exploited by commercial capital.[15] So the argument that in the
industrially developed countries the size of the middle class is
expanding is only an attempt to distort reality.

The Indian situation.

Even if it is granted that in the industrially developed capitalist
countries the economic position of the middle classes is not worsen-
ing, the situation is quite different in the case of India. A country
which bears all the vestiges of colonialism, where capitalist growth
has become half hearted and truncated and where there is increasing
impoverishment and misery, the middle classes are being crushed
into a desperate situation. The middle classes remain contented if
there is a smooth sailing, if adequate opportunities are provided for
upward mobility for one's own and for the sons and daughters. If
these are provided, they remain the supporters of the status quo.
But it is exactly these aspects which are being threatened. This is
increasing their desperation and frustration. They are the victims
of the pressure of large capital on the one hand and the actual
process of proletarisation among them on the other. They grow
bourgeois ambitions and attitudes whereas the objective situation
does not satisfy their urge for material prosperity. It was exactly
this type of dilemma which Marx had spoken about. It is no longer
possible for the middle classes to act as a buffer between the two
warring classes. They are forced to take sides.

While this is the general picture about the modern Indian society,
a look at the historical development of the middle classes show that
its dependent and parasitic character became manifest even from the
very beginning. There have been some talk about the growth of the
middle class in pre-British India. It has been said that the priests,
the traders, merchants, teachers, musicians, warriors etc. constituted
this middle stratum. And in a period of relative prosperity, they
distinguished themselves from the lowest levels. The traders and

merchants had a wide scope for spatial mobility and they could exert their pressure on the princes and nobilities. Radhakamal Mukherjee says, "In Mughal India, the lowest rung of the economic ladder was represented by the agrestic serfs ; above them was the common peasantry who also lived in great poverty, next was the middle class composed of the petty traders and merchants who were thrifty and rich, while at the top was a small but extremely luxurious aristocracy. The shop-keepers, the traders, the merchants, the bankers as well as the physicians and the writer-caste constituted the middle class in Mughal India."[16]

But the middle class elements in pre-British India could not develop into a distinct and stratified social order, being conscious of their separate identity and being able to move freely in social space. The merchants, traders and guilds had enormous monetary power, but this could not be used by them to weild political or military authorities. The guilds became effective only at times of political instability. But since political instability affected the economic interests of the guilds, they tried to avoid such situations. The political and economic system was thus characterized by 'oriental despotism'. B. B. Misra says, "The Indian political and social systems as a whole were authoritarian and despotic in nature, highly prejudicial to the growth of an independent bourgeois class. Indian merchants were known for their fabulous wealth, but generally they were loyal monopolists appointed after the collapse of merchant guilds and dependent for their prosperity upon palace officials or provincial governors."[17] The rigid compartmentalisation of society on caste lines and the tight control of the priestly class both in the villages and towns also acted as impediments to their freedom. The truth is that the rise of the middle class is historically linked with the development of capitalism. Capitalism came from the middle class burghers and this had its foundations on the destruction of feudalism. While analysing the rise of the middle classes in England, Lewis and Mande say, "It is usual to think of the middle class — the burghers or bourgeoisie — as a product of the later stages of feudalism, modifying, disrupting and finally supplanting the feudal culture from which it emerged."[18]

The type of economy which was generated in India with the advent of British rule, was only made suitable for the needs of

colonial interest. In Europe, expanding trade and commerce, indus-
trial revolution and an ideology of freedom provided the impetus
behind the growth of capitalism. But in India growth was allowed
only to that extent to which it did not clash with the British colonial
interest. Let us analyse this phenomenon with reference to the
growth and attitude of two key sectors of middle classes, the busi-
ness class and the intelligentsia.

Though British rule resulted in a vast expansion of trade and
commerce along with the establishment of large scale industries, the
advantages of these were confined largely among the British
merchants and capitalists. Whereas the old cottage and small scale
industries were destroyed, the Indian market was flooded with British
industrial products. The centuries-old foreign market which was
created by the Indian traders, became inaccessible. Marx says, "It
was the British intruder who broke up the Indian hand loom and
destroyed the spinning wheel ... British steam and science uprooted,
over the whole surface of Hindostan, the union between agriculture
and manufacturing industry."[19] For the incipient Indian industries,
whereas a policy of protection was needed no such protection was
offered by the British Indian government The British finance capital
exercised its stanglehold over Indian economy. The Banking insti-
tution and the general policies of the government were not meant for
Indian industrial expansion. The result was that though there grew
a class of indigenous bourgeoisie, they remained crippled from the
start.

The more disquieting feature was that even such a crippled body
was characterised from the very start by the growth of monopolies
and trusts. Most of the business enterprises remained in a few
hands from the very beginning. This prevented the growth of a
middle level of industrialists and businessmen and further impeded
industrial expansion. A. R. Desai says, "This contrasted with the
history of the economic development of such countries as England,
France, Germany and the USA where such concentration took place
in later stages of their economic growth only. In India, on the other
hand, concentration took place within a few decades of the establish-
ment of industries." These people of Indian origin, while cornering
all the available benefits, prevented the diversification of Indian

economy and growth of Indian economy and growth of enterpreneurship. Thus the curbs imposed by colonial rulers and the class composition of the Indian bourgeoisie combind to prevent the growth of a viable middle level strata of businessmen and industrialists.

The growth of the professionals and the intelligentsia was also strongly influenced by British rule. In Europe, with the emergence capitalist. enterpreneurship a distinct group of technicians, economists and philosophers arose to provide necessary moral and ideological support to emerging capitalism. One can say that the new bourgeoisie emerged on the "twin props of money and intellect". This was not so in India. Feudalism was still rampant and the emerging 'bhadraloks', the urban based middle class intellectuals were tied with feudalism both morally and materially. The prosperity of the affluent people in rural areas was based on exploitation of the cultivating tenants. The middle classes constituted largely of the intermediaries who exploited the peasants in cullusion with the absentee landlords. As one could thus live life marrily, initiative, enterpreneurship and hard work were just alien concepts among them. Ashok Mitra says, "The new middle class in the village largely grew on the cornering of occupancy tenancies, the village credit systems, the proceeds of rack-rents and *abwabs* and the employment of increasing number of share-croppers and agricultural labourers, and not on better husbandry, agricultural improvements and better management."[21] Egalitarian values and liberal political outlook had no appeal for them, these middle class people in rural areas represented a decadent culture and an oppressive system.

The growth of the urban middle classes was also not related with the growth of capitalism. It was in fact, a process of 'deindustrialization' which was taking place in India. Old towns and cities were being destroyed. Artisans and traders, devoid of their old source of income, flocked to rural areas. In cities, industrial enterpreneurship was not open to Indians. There were only two avenues open to Indian businessmen. (1) money lending and agricultural financing and (2) operating as middle-men and brokers to British firms. In fact, throughout the 18th and early 19th century, the Indian commercial

class only worked as an appendage to British commercial and industrial interest. To make matters worse, these middlemen and brokers had also a dominant caste composition. Yogendra Singh observes, "Baniyas, Jains (Shroffs) and some Kayasthas dominated as brokers in the Calcutta region ; Parsis, Baniyas and Jains mainly controlled such business in Bombay and the Chettiars did so in Madras. Like elites at other levels, these business elites too came primarily from the upper segment of the caste structure."[32]

The cultural and educational elites living in urban areas also reflected the ambiguities involved in a colonial and decadent culture. This class did not emerge after a decisive break with feudalism. It was closely integrated with feudal interest on the one hand and British colonial interest on the other. In fact, their feudal interest prompted them to look to colonial ruler as a friend and saviour. The leading city based intellectuals and 'renaissance' leaders had close ties with the zamindars and large estate holders living in the cities — in fact, many of them were zamindars themselves. The new ideas and styles of life by which they were enamoured had little connection with native culture. Edward Shils commented, "India was, and remains, an intellectual province of London, Oxford and Cambridge". The result was that the influence of the new ideas and styles of life remained concentrated only among a tiny section of the population. C. E. Trevelyan wrote about them in 1838, "Educated in the same way, interested in the same objects, engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, they (the educated youngmen) became more English than Hindus, just as the Roman Provincials became more Romans than Gauls or Italians."[35] These new educated elites could not play the role which their counterparts played in Europe. The consequent 'renaissance' which took place in India had no social character in the real sense of the term. It consisted of those people who were mostly uprooted from their own culture and tradition and who had their vested interest in the preservation of the old social and economic order. Ashok Mitra says about them "It was this class of proprietors, enriched by the plunder of millions of poor peasants who brought about a cultural resurgence in the city. The mouthpiece was Ram Mohan Roy. This resurgence has often been mistakenly called the Indian Renaissance often fondly so by the class which were its beneficiaries .. The 'renaissance' was, characteristically

enough, brought to fruition by an alliance with the ruling power by a class of absentee landlords and Banians aspiring to be 'junior partners' away from the village. This 'renaissance' did not touch the rural economy of the country at all. The country at large did not exist for the Renaissance."[24]

The ambivalent and vacillating character of the Indian intellectualls becomes evident if one analyses the speeches and writings of its leaders. Rommohan Roy was no doubt a patriot. But what was his ideal ? He envisaged of a future England and India as "two free and christian countries, united as they will then be by resemblance of language, religion and manners". To Ramesh Chandra Dutt, "the ideal of an Indian patriot is a seeming paradox. He must fight for the best interests of his own country, and at the same time be genuinely loyal to the British crown and work for the continuance and permanence of British rule. "Throughout the 19th century we find enough evidence of this paradox and uprootedness of the intellectuals. Nehru summed up the position beautifully whill describing his own dilemma ; "I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern but India clings to me as she does to all her children, in innumerable ways... I am a stranger and alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also sometimes I have an exiles feeling."[25]

But with the increasing differentiation of elite structure and a corresponding expansion of its social base, nationalistic ideas and ideas which reflect the different levels of interests of Indian population, influenced their thought. This produced two contradictory trends. On the one hand there emerged a strong section preaching cultural revivalism, wanting to set India on route to its 'golden past'. Gandhi was the greatest leader falling in this category. In fact, Gandhi's magical influence on Indian people lies in the fact that he gave nationalism a religious fervour. One can say that a majority of our nationalist leaders wanted to mobilize masses on this line. There was a second type of trend. As capitalism was expanding, the capitalist production relation became more and more strong and this compelled many intellectuals to look

at the objective situation and interpret it on Marxist lines. But the influence of the Marxist leaders, scholars and activists were not very strong as the colonials, nationalists and revivalists could soon identify their real enemy and combined to keep the Marxist influence at a minimum.   There was nothing astonishing in it.   As Marx and Engels wrote, " ... The class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.   The class which has the means of material production at its disposal consequently also controls the means of mental production ... "[26] What was significant was that the influence of this trend of thought was increasing among the masses.   For the first time in Indian history a section of people within the middle classes arose who pointed out the necessity of the end of feudal capitalist regime in India.   The process started working at the beginning of the present century but by the 1930's the middle class revolutionaries could provide a strong leadership to the workers and peasants.

The differentiation of middle class structure which was already noticeable during the British rule became further prominent in post independent India.   The conflict between alternative types of elites holding nationalist and radical ideologies became more acute.   While speaking about Ghana and Indonesia, Kerstiens has observed the same phenomenon there.   As he says, "The new western educated elite is, however, menaced by a newer group, the mass leaders ... The mass leader in general is not so well educated, nor so western in outlook, but is in closer contact with the population.   He has come forward from the mass organization, either trade unions, youth groups or the army.   This elite, being more revolutionary in outlook, outbids the Western group in its stand against the European elite.   If the latter has been concerned with breaking the European elite's political strength it was still willing to let it hold on to a great deal of its economic power, and imitate its style of life.   The former is, however, against European economic power in which it sees a form of neo-colonialism"[27].   What Kerstiens has not said however, is that it is a conflict between the ideologies of two rival economic systems where the radical one is on the winning side.

As we have said, there has occurred a significant increase in the number of persons belonging to the middle classes in post-independent India.   It is true that we do not have a reliable index of

the strength of the middle classes in contemporary India. The intellectuals consisting of those engaged in the various technical, legal and educational institutions, journalists, literateurs and artists and the professionals including the employees of government and private organizations are vastly expanding. Writing in 1961, Shils made a distinction between productive intellectuals and consuming intellectuals. While the former are directly engaged in intellectual activities, the latter, by their training and disposition, are interested in intellectual matters. Shils estimated that while there are about 60,000 productive intellectuals there are about 100,000 consuming intellectuals in India. Even by the 1961 standard, this was far less than the strength of the middle classes in India. Even assuming that in India about 10 p. c. of the population constitute the upper and lower segments of middle classes, there are about 70 million persons comprising the middle classes now-a-days.

How did Marx foresee the role of the middle classes and what has been our experience in India ? The Marxist idea about the role of the middle classes basically emphasizes upon two concepts : increasing proletarization of the middle classes and an increasing political identification with the cause of socialist revolution. The concept of proletarization can be discussed from two standpoints again, viz, the professional role of the middle classes in a capitalist economy and the material condition of the middle classess in modern India.

At the heart of the bourgeois theories with regard to the role of the middle classes, lies the distinction between physical labour and mental labour. It is assumed that those who are engaged in mental labour constitute the middle class and are not affected by any class conflict. Increasing mechanization is a further evidence that the necessity of manual labour is decreasing and as such the middle classes are expanding. But this approach is basically wrong as those doing mental labour or the intelligentsia do not operate outside the purview of the rule of capital. They also sale their products of labour in the market and the price is governed by the rules of capitalist economy. They may not be hired workers in the sense in which the workers are but the demand of their products are governed by the condition of the economy. As it has been said, "with few

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exceptions persons of intellectual abour are hired workers. That means that like workers they sale, not the product of their labour but their labour power, and consequently, the laws, too that govern the price of the labour power of intellectuals are in general the same as for, workers."[8] In India, if we look at the intelligentsia, the same picture will emerge. As our economy is facing more and more crisis, the market situation which governs the price of the products of the intelligentsia is becoming more and more harsh. So in a capitalist country like India nobody is outside the rule of capital. We can say that those engaged in mental labour are also wage-labourers and are victims of an exploitative economic order.

From the standpoint of the condition of Indian economy the crushing burden of increasing cost of life and a drastic reduction of the employment market are affecting the middle classes even more severely. What the middle classes want is essentially security and easy life — security for one's own and for future generations. As our capitalist economy is in the midst of a crisis, this security is being endangered. Increasing poverty, unemployment, crisis in education, crisis in values — all these has led the middle classes to a frustrating situation. They realize that the structural constraints of the economy are so deep rooted that only an overthrow of the entire system will liberate them.

Various instances may be cited to show the increasing crisis of Indian economy. According to an estimate of the Planning Commission, 251·66 million people in the rural areas and 51·10 million in the urban areas were living below the poverty line in 1978 and it went up to 316·84 million in 1980. As regards the extent of educated unemployment, compared to 16·2 million unemployed people on the registers in 1980, there were 17·8 million in 1981. The, figure has been going up steadily from 10 million in 1977 to 12·6 million in 1978 and to 14·3 million in 1978, but the actual extent, of unemployment must be still higher, since not everyone cares to record his name at the employment exchange. The problem is most acute at lower levels but technicians and specialists are also not exempted. The literacy rate remains almost stagnant whereas the cost of living is increasing almost daily. These are all instances of increasing proletarization. There is pushing and jostling all around

for securing two few opportunities and more and more people are being pushed down the social ladder. This is a desperate situation and our middle classes are looking around in search of a suitable ideology and programme.

All these invite some discussion about the political role of the middle classes in a fast changing economy. There are a number of theories championed by writers ranging from bourgeois conservatists to radical revolutionaries. One such theory is the enunciation of the non-class character of the intelligentsia and the students. It is assumed that these people transgress the boundaries of any class. Free from dogmatism and having the power of intellect — they constitute the most radical and revolutionary segment of modern societies. They constitute what is known as 'third power' — the old strategy of revolution and the old revolutionary class has become outdated. Under the changed situation, the students and the intelligentsia — united by the common bond of education and culture — constitute the most radical section of population. They are 'above class'. Karl Mannheim says about them, "one of the most impressive facts about modern life is than in it, unlike preceding cultures, intellectual activity is not carried on exclusively by a socially regidly defined class, such as priesthood, but rather by a social stratum which is to a large degree unattached to any social class." These people enjoy a 'middle of the road' position and can effectively reflect the interests of various conflicting classes.[20] Some even argue that the proletariat in the Marxist sense, is disappearing, that 'new working class' in the shape of the intelligentsia is taking its place in 'post-industrial society'. They are the 'new proletariats' in a new era. Any programme of social change must, therefore, be initiated by these people.

One can never deny the role of the intelligentsia and the students in revolution. But any attempt to attribute non-class character to them is a deliberate distortion of reality. The rank of the intelligentsia has definitely increased today but this has also added to their social, class diversity. They do not represent a class as they do not represent any definite type of relations of production. On the other hand, the ranks of the intelligentsia consist of a number of

classes. Antonio Gramsci pointed out that a class creates its own
intellectuals in order to carry forward the ideas and interests of the
class. The intelligentsia wants to secure economy and social
hegemony of the class it represents.[30] In that sense, even the
workers produce their intelligentsia. Lenin understood this pheno-
menon when he said, "like any other class in modern society, the
proletariat is not only advancing intellectuals from its own midst,
but also accepts into its ranks supporters from the midst of all and
sundry educated people."[31] Thus it would be a misnomer to say
that the middle classes, particularly the intelligentsia, have assumed
an autonomous role in modern societies. Politically they are
powerful in the sense that they extend support to either of the
warring classes in modern times. The top rankers among them
support the cause of the bourgeoisie while the vast majority of others
undergo the process of proletarization and cast their destiny with the
working class. The crises of the middle classes cannot be solved by
forming a political organization of their own. In India, there have
been scores of suggestions of this kind.[32] But given the non-class
role of the middle classes, the suggestion is ludicruous.

Another variant of this non-class approach is developed with
reference to the third world countries. It is said that the capitalism,
which has developed in these countries, is of a very different kind.
The hold of organized capital as also the hold of organized labour
is very minimum in these societies. On the one hand, capitalism is
linked in a highly dependent way with the developed capitalist
economies. Historically there have been three types of capitalist
domination over these societies, viz, colonial domination, capitalist
commercial domination and imperialist industrial and financial
domination.[33] But even this highly dependent capitalist sector
exercises control only over a very small sector of the economy.
There is a marked structural inequality in the distribution of
capital and great unevenness in its distribution. Capital accumu-
lates only in some highly technical and profit-oriented sectors.
As a result, employment opportunities are created only mariginally
absorbing only a tiny section of population. "In Columbia, for
example, during the 1960s, the active labour force was growing at
a rate of 200,000 per year, while by contrast agriculture could only
provide 30,000 new jobs per year and the modern manufacturing

sector 10,000 new jobs per year. The rest of the labour force has been absorbed in construction, handicrafts and services — often somewhat artificially or has not been absorbed at all."[84] The resulting structure of the working class is very different in these societies consisting of a very large segment of 'self-employed' people having very scarce capital resources, primitive technology and little enterpreneurial skill. This sector of economy "provide a natural entry point for migrants from the country who win a precarious foothold into urban economy by crowding into petty trade, services and other small scale activities. Overmanning of these activities contributes to low output and income per worker."[85]

It is assumed that in the third world countries, these small traders, mariginal workers and other self-employed and unemployed people constitute the really revolutionally force in society. Herbert Marcuse fondly hopes "the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colours, the unemployed and the unemployables" will put an end to the exploitative society.[86] While speaking about the African societies, Fanon says, "It is within this mass of humanity, this people of the shanty towns, at the core of the lumpen-proletariat that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the lumpen proletariat, that horde of starving men uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most redically revolutionary forces of a colonized people."[87]

Of course there is no middle-class bias in Fanon's theory. We cannot discuss this theory in great details here ; our only reaction is that though these 'wretched' and the 'uprooted' men constitute a seizable section of the poor, the revolution cannot be 'spearheaded' by them. This is the task of the working class — the most organized, and politically most conscious section of the exploited. But those who hold that the petti-bourgeoisie, the small traders and the self-employed people constitute the core of the working class in these societies give emphasis on their middle class character and thereby display a non-class approach. The essential point they miss is that they constitute a part of the workers and are victims of the rule of capital. Increasing concentration of capital results in increasing unemployment and underemployment. This is a part of the

capitalist economic crisis, The actual nature of this crisis in the third world countries is certainly somewhat different from those found in the developed capitalist societies but the genesis of the crisis is from the same source, viz. capitalism. As such, these people have to take either of the two sides viz. support the system or oppose it.

This is the question of polarization and in India this polarization is taking place. There is no simple arithmatical formulae explaining this process of polarization. The vacillating character of the middle class is most prominent in this sphere. Small trade and independent work may produce the illusion that they have control over their own work and destiny. They may thus uphold the value of independent labour. And "the end product of this message is the creation of a number of ideological variants, each of which is supportive in its own way of the capitalist system."[56] Marx mentioned this phenomenon when he spoke about the role of 'pygmy property' — failing to solve its problems through radical political action, it may lend support to the parties of the right upholding the virtues of profit and corporate property. It is in this sense that fascism has its strong base among the middle class people. This is historically true and we found some elements of it among the Indian middle classes as well. But this trend cannot be a permanent one. The objective situation operates in such a manner that the middle class illusion of finding some place in the ruling class soon evaporates and they are forced to cast their lot with other sections of the working people. The left parties in India have an urgent task in this situation — to channelise and to organize the middle classes in a proper manner. The lesson is that unless the middle class frustration is organized and given proper direction, there is every possibility of this discontentruent following wrong lines of protest, The various chauvinistic movements in different parts of India confirms this suspicion.

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STUDENT POLITICS IN INDIA :
A HISTORICAL PROFILE *

ANIRBAN BANERJEE * *

INTRODUCTION

Student activism in India has had a chequered history. Having originated as a reaction to colonial exploitation, the student move-ment has undergone considerable changes in course of its evolution and emerged as a mighty force. I have tried to highlight in this paper the salient trends and landmarks without getting bogged down in trivial details. I have discussed the history of student activism in India within the overall framework of the social, political and cultural history of India. This is necessary in order to understand why students took different postures at different times. In under-taking this study, I have based myself on an extensive survey of literature on the subject. The survey covers books, monographs, papers, newsreports, newspaper and magazine articles and political literature published by students.

Nature of Student Activism

At the outset, it is necessary to explain what is a student move-ment. A student movement is not a social club, college fraternity or academic association. It is a political movement. Student move-ments are political in the sense that all the problems they tackle are interpreted as resulting from the power structure.[1] They are always expressed organizationally.[2] As students come from the great society, it is only natural that they will champion popular aspirations.

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Hence, Feuer has noted that the student movements are inspired by a back-to-the people spirit.

Student movements generally take place at three distinct levels — the intra-mural, national and international.[8] Intra-mural movements generally take place within universities or colleges, national movements take place within nations and international movements through international student organizations. Thus a movement within the confines of Presidency College, Calcutta, will be an intra-mural movement, a movement embracing the entire Indian nation will be a national movement and a movement that spreads beyond the borders of India and leads to student activism in other countries will be international in character.

Lewis A. Feuer has defined a student movement as : "A combination of students, inspired by aims which they try to explicate in a political ideology and moved by a political ideology and emotional rebellion in which there is always present a rejection of the values of the older generation ; moreover the members of a student movement have a conviction that their generation has a specific historical mission to fulfil where the older generation and other classes and elites have failed."[4] Apart from generational consciousness, student movements, I think, may also include varying degrees of other feelings. In a colonial state, a pronounced anti-colonial feeling may develop. In a state having an authoritarian regime, students may press for democracy. Feuer holds that student movements are "among the most irrational in history"[5] but this is not correct. It does have definite and reasonable goals to achieve, and these goals may vary from country to country or from one historical situation to another.

Several social, political and historical forces may impinge upon the student movement. One indicator of the degree of political participation of students is the type of regime, a second is the political tradition of the country. In case of India, the role of caste, region, language, tribe and religion are of vital importance.

To accomplish its goal, a student movement, as Feuer has pointed out, must ally itself with a 'carrier' movement of major proportions like peasant, labour or national movement. Historically, as in case

of India, student movements have been components of carrier movements.

A student movement strives further to fulfil the role of the conscience of society. Students vehemently oppose measures, which they feel are unjust. The student movement thus is a permeated by an ethical consciousness.

A student movement differs from youth movements because it has, in addition, the component of intellectualism.

This gives the student movement an ideological dimension. The ideology may either be progressive or reactionary. While progressive movements generally strive to unite people against a common enemy — an imperial power or a ruthless dictator, a reactionary movement divides the people by setting one section of the people against another.

Characteristics of Indian Student Activism

Indian student activism shares many of the features common to all student movements. In addition, the historico-specific features of the Indian situation has given the student movement certain specific features. In the first place, the Indian student movement has a pronounced anti-colonial stance which is largely the heritage of the Indian freedom struggle. However, India shares this anti-colonial tradition with other former colonies. Secondly, an anti-establishment stance is also the hall mark of the student movement in India. The history of the Indian student movement shows that Indian students have always championed the cause of the masses against governmental attempts to curb democratic rights and freedoms, whether in pre-independence or post-independence India. Thirdly, Indian students generally have been progressive in their outlook, though one may come across conservative or reactionary trends also. The student movement has always been championing the cause of increasing democratic rights and fundamental freedoms of the people and protecting them against authoritarian onslaughts. Fourthly, Philip G. Altbach's distinction between norm-oriented and value-oriented student activism[8] applies to India's student movements. The Indian student movement has been both norm and

value oriented. A norm-oriented movement is concerned with achieving specific goals whereas a value-oriented movement is concerned . with ideological issues. Thus the Indian National Movement was a norm-oriented one, whereas the Naxalbari movement was a value-oriented one. Fifthly, we find that political parties play an important role in fomenting student activism on and off campus. Sixthly and finally, we find that caste, language, religion, regionalism and ethnicity influence Indian student politics.

The Students' Federation of India (West Bengal State Committee), in a recent book on the history of student activism in India, regards 1936, the year of the establishment of the *All India Students' Federation*, to be the beginning of organized student activism in India.[6] (The book was published in 1986 to commemorate 50 years of organized student activism in India.) The period prior to this is described as the proto-historical period. I do not, however, agree with this contention. I would rather push the date further back to 1905, when student activism found the first institutionalised expression through the *Anti-Circular Society*, which was the first militant student organization in India. It formed part of the Swadeshi Movement.

I have divided the history of student activism in India into three main parts. .

(1) *The Proto-Historical Stage* — In this phase the student movement was at a dormant level. It embraces the entire 19th century and continues till 1905.

(2) *The Stage of the Freedom Struggle* — In this phase students joined hands with the masses and contributed their mite to the national effort to overthrow colonialism.

(3) *The Post-independence phase* — In this period, the students joined and supported mass movements which were concerned at resisting the anti-people policies of the Centre and State Governments.

The Proto-Historical Stage (1800 - 1905)

The growth of an organized student movement in India is closely linked with the process of social, political and cultural changes

brought about by the impact of colonialism. The entire 19th century witnessed the expansion and consolidation of colonial rule, the rise of new social classes and violent resistance to the colonial power from different sections of Indian society. And this resistance culminated in the birth of bourgeois nationalism which found organized expression in the Indian National Congress.

The British conquest of India was responsible for the development of a capitalist society in India. Bengal was the first to feel the impact of the new policies formulated by the British. The Bengal Renaissance is associated with the rise of new social classes in Indian society. The introduction of the Permanent Settlement resulted in the transplantation of the English manor on to the Bengali countryside, thereby giving rise to two social classes — the zaminder and the tenants. In the urban areas, the growth of commerce brought about the development of mercantile capitalism, the growth of industry brought about the development of two classes — the industrial bourgeoisie and the industrial proletariat. The needs of British administration and commerce brought about the growth of professional classes.[7]

The needs of the British administration and commerce prompted the British to introduce a new education policy. The two major objectives of the British education policy were : (1) to train sufficient manpower for the needs of British administration and commerce and (2) to politically socialise the younger generation to accept the legitimacy of colonial rule. These, I would argue, were the manifest functions of British education. But there was another function which was not explicitly intended, namely, to promote a cultural renaissance among Indians, termed the *Bengal Renaissance* by Susobhan Sarkar. "For more than a century", it has been pointed out, "Bengal's consciousness of the changing world was more developed and ahead than the rest of India."[8] The Bengal Renaissance saw a remarkable efflorescence in different spheres of life — social, political, religious, literary and artistic. The Young Bengal movement was the first youthful expression of this cultural awakening.

The Young Bengal Movement

The Young Bengal Movement was a product of the British cultural impact on Bengal. Ancient India, it is said, was a "land

without youth" because young people passed directly from an extremely permissive childhood to the religious, social and economic responsibilities of adulthood.[9]   The system maintenance function of education was evident in its aim to make the pupils staunch Hindus or Muslims, who were to be uncritical subscribers to their respective religious and social structures.[10]   With the introduction of western education, a gap appeared between childhood and adulthood.   The period of studentship being greatly extended, a peer group culture began to develop.   Secondly, the impact of the liberal and rational doctrines resulted in a critical outlook among young people, stimulating a youth movement.   *Young Bengal* was the first expression of the awakening of Indian youth.

Young Bengal was centred around the youthful Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, (1809-31), a free thinker and a poet, who taught in *Hindu College*.   To his pupils Derozio was an *alter ego*, their friend, philosopher and guide.   The young men were encouraged by their teacher to revolt against orthodoxy, to critically analyse their society.   Rasikkrishna Mullick, Ramtanu Lahiri, Krishnamohan Banerjee, Ramgopal Ghose were some of the leading exponents of this trend.   Their criticism of the established institutions of contemporary society, taking forbidden food and drink and in some cases openly renouncing Hinduism, shocked and scandalised the orthodox who declared war against Derozio, who they alleged, was corrupting the youth.   Derozio was forced to resign from the *Hindu College* but to his pupils he remained an object of admiration and emulation.

The Young Bengal trend, it would be fair to say, was a blend of some healthy as well as unhealthy trends.   Among the healthy trends, we may note, was their progressive outlook and rationalism. They lived in an age of social turbulence.   Contemporary society was in great ferment over Rammohun's strenuous campaign against *Sati*.   Rammohun also criticised some aspects the colonial rule.   All this had a great impact on the students of Hindu College.   Through their *Academic Association*, our first debating society, and the *Athaenum (Parthenon)* magazine, they not only criticised the vices of contemporary society but also critically analysed colonial rule.   We find that their ethical superiority over the elders gave rise to a generational conflict of an unparalleled intensity.   They were patriots

par excellence. Derozio himself was a great patriot and his poems like "To India — My Native Land" highlight the depth and intensity of his patriotic feelings. After his death, we find his pupils like Rasikkrishna Mullick, Ramgopal Ghose and others taking up cudgels against colonialism. For example, in 1833, Rasikkrishna Mullick criticised police corruption, drew attention to the unprotected status of the peasantry under the Permanent Settlement and advocated the abolition of the political power of the Company. Ramgopal Ghose, the "Indian Demosthenes," defended in his *Remarks* the so-called "black bills" which sought to abolish judicial immunities of Europeans in India which had caused an outcry among Europeans. In 1830, when Derozio was alive, these youths gave free play to their spirit of internationalism by celebrating the July Revolution in France (1830). That same year, Krishnamohan Banerjee inaugurated a periodical, *The Enquirer* to fight obscurantism while Rasikkrishna Mullick's *Jnaneswaram* was intended to instruct the people about the science of government and jurisprudence.[11]

These were the positive aspects of Young Bengal. But it had its negative side as well. A. R. Desai pointed out that :

> Modern education created an unhealthy reaction among Indians who received it.
>
> The first contact with the modern western culture through new education was electrifying. The essential rational and liberal core of this culture was not however comprehended by a section of the Indians. *While correctly discarding old norms and criteria which only imposed fetters on the free creative initiative of the individual, the educated Indians failed to substitute in its place, rational norms and criteria to guide individual conduct* (emphasis mine). He misunderstood freedom from all irrational taboos as freedom to do anything that a chance impulse incited. He misunderstood freedom as license to drink or to indulge in unhealthy modes of sex life. While overthrowing old authoritarian conceptions of social life, he could not evolve a positive social conception. He saw the irrationality of the old forms and outlooks but he could not evolve a positive social conception.

His reaction to the old milieu·was predominantly negative. He saw through the irrationality of the old forms and out-looks but could not build up a new positive progressive theory for individual and social practice. This often bred anarchy in personal life and brought about his isolation from the people.[12]

This criticism of the educated Indian is partly relevant in case of *Young Bengal*. In their zeal for rationality, the Derozians began to denounce their heritage. Hence we find Madhab Chandra Mullick remarking in the college magazine — "if there is anything that we hate from the bottom of the heart, it is Hinduism." Again, their addiction to forbidden food and drink was another unhealthy trend. To cap it all, some of the Derozians like Krishnamohan Banerjee embraced Christianity, simply to demonstrate their hatred for Hinduism. All this gave a handle to contemporary orthodoxy to chastise these young men. Because of these glaring shortcomings, *Young Bengal* failed to develop into a political movement with a definite ideology. Nevertheless, they made a great contribution to the cultural life of Bengal. They were regarded as the embodiment of all that was noble and good. As Haramohan Chatterjee of the Hindu College Office once testified : "They were all considered men of truth. Indeed the college boy was a synonym of truth." As Susobhan Sarkar rightly observed, the most memorable aspects of *Young Bengal* were "a fearless rationalism and a candid appreciation of the liberating thought from the West."[13]

Rise of Nationalist Student Bodies

The 19th century witnessed several major trends. In the political field, we find British rule consolidating itself in the teeth of fierce resistance of the Indian people. On the other hand, the new cultural awakening brought with it a new zeal for social reform and religious reform, a new literature that reflected not only a new social awareness but also preached patriotism. Bourgeois nationalism arose, and its main exponents were the newly rising middle classes, more specifically the intelligentsia. B. B. Mishra had classified Indian students among the middle classes.[14] We may also say that they were the budding intelligentsia.

A large number of student societies arose in Bengal during this period. In 1838, the radical students of Hindu College set up a quasi-political body — the *Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge*. In 1841, we find the *Deshahitaishinee Sabha*, a full-fledged political organization, at a meeting attended by 2000 students of Derozio. Sarada Prasad Ghosh, in his key note speech, accused the British rulers of depriving the Indians of political liberty and observed that this was the cause of our misery and degradation. In fairness, we cannot say that a student movement developed during this period but a new spirit was present among the forward-looking student-youth of Bengal.

In the 1870s the first serious attempt was made to organize the students as a compact force dedicated to national regeneration. In 1875, the Brahmo radicals like Krishna Kumar Bose and Bipin Chandra Pal organized the *Calcutta Students Association*. Surendranath Banerjee and Anandamohan Bose were its patrons. When the *Indian Association* was formed in 1876, the students of Calcutta colleges formed its backbone. In the same year, a student organization, the *Samadarshi*, was formed. The members took the following pledge : "To us self-government is the best form of government. No man should marry before he is 21, no woman before she is 16. We shall try to educate the masses. We do not believe in private property, but we shall work for national welfare with co-operative society as our goal."[5]

In 1882-83 came the Ilbert Bill agitation which demonstrated the racism of the Europeans. When Surendranath Banerjee was convicted, the students protested *en masse*, went on a strike, and the student movement took a new turn.

Institutionalization of the National Movement

By the end of 1885, the Indian National Congress was born. Indian nationalism thus got an organizational shape. The Indian National Congress provided an umbrella organization, drawing within its fold all sorts of people who were interested in working for the national cause. The period 1885-1905 also saw a parallel movement, the Aligarh Movement, which became the vehicle both of

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Muslim regeneration and communalism, thanks to the British policy of division and counterpoise.

The Impact of Bankim, Vivekananda and Rabindranath

In the cultural sphere, three giants shaped Indian nationalism, Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda and Rabindranath made a great impact upon the national movement in general and youths in particular. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath* greatly influenced Indian nationalism. The hymn, *Vandemataram,* in effect became the National Song. *Vandemataram* became the battle cry of the nationalists. *Anandamath* was based on the historic Sannyasi rebellion in Bengal. It is one of the books written to explain his *Anusilantatwa*. The book exercised an enormous impact on the youths of that time, due to its patriotic spirit.

Swami Vivekananda's fiery nationalism also made a deep impress upon the youths. Vivekananda made Indians proud when he became recognised as India's cultural ambassador to the West after his participation in the World Congress of Religions (1893). He emphatically declared : "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and acceptance. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions, of all nations of the earth."[16] He refuted the belief that all people needed to be converted to Christianity and stressed the need for peaceful coexistence of all religions. Vivekananda wanted Indian youths to participate in national work. He called upon them to participate in constructive activities, "Mother India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand youths"[17] — he wrote in a letter to one of his disciples.

Another figure who greatly influenced the Indian youths was Rabindranath Tagore. Through his soul-stirring patriotic poems and songs, his active participation in national politics and through his school in Santiniketan, Tagore made a great impact on Bengali youths, who felt encouraged to participate in national politics.

The Stage of the Freedom Struggle (1905-1947)

By 1905, the political climate was hotting up, Curzon's policy of officializing the Calcutta Corporation and his policy of curtailment

of access to higher education drew nationalist criticism. Curzon's strictures on the Bengali national character offended Bengali sensibilities. Meanwhile, the defeat of Russia at the hands of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War (1905) broke the myth of European invincibility and considerably boosted national consciousness. At this juncture, the decision of Curzon to partition Bengal on communal lines set ablaze the tinder box of Bengali nationalism.

The Swadeshi Movement and the Anti-Circular Society (1905)

The Swadeshi Movement was the first in the series of 'carrier' movements in which the Indian students participated. The beginning of organized student activism in India can be dated from this period. In many colonial and semi-colonial countries, we find that student movements emerge as a reaction to colonial domination. Thus Josef Silverstein's study of Burmese student activism,[18] John Isreal's study of Chinese students[19], and Douglas and Bachtiar's study of Indonesian students[20] categorically demonstrated that colonialism was the prime factor responsible for student activism. It is natural for students to participate in anti-colonial movements. Their education and awareness of the conditions of the country under colonialism, aroused in them a burning desire to do away with colonial domination at any cost and undo the incalculable damage colonialism inflicts on the country.

In Bengal too the same consciousness of the evil effects of colonialism led to student activism. Its first institutionalised expression came in response to the Education Secretary, Carlyle's circular prohibiting student political activity. The students set up the *Anti-Circular Society* on November 4, 1905 at a 5000 strong rally in Calcutta's College Square. Sachindranath Prasad Basu, a 4th year student of City College, Calcutta, and Ramakanto Roy, a young engineer, were the main organizers. The students put up a glorious resistance to imperialism. They set up National Schools to accommodate students expelled for political activity at Rangpur, Khulna, Noakhali and Barisal. They also sold 1 lakh rupee worth of Swadeshi clothes through 75 centres in just 11 months. On boycott day, August 7, 1906, the volunteers of the *Anti-Circular Society* presented Surendranath Banerjee with a specimen of India's national

flag. This was definitely a historic act and showed how far advanced the students were in their political consciousness. It is evident that the students took a more radical stance than their leaders. They thought of independence even before their leaders. Equally commendable is the role of the students in maintaining communal harmony. In February 1906, when a communal riot threatened to break out at Jessore, Sachin and his friends of the *Society* rushed to that place and restored communal amity. The students also gave great examples of personal heroism and self-sacrifice. When the District Magistrate, Emerson, banned the shouting of *Vande Mataram* during the Barisal Conference (April 14-15, 1906), the leaders accepted the ban but the students defied it. As a result, Sachindranath Basu and Chittaranjan Guha Thakurta were savagely beaten by the police.

The student and youth movement began to flow into two channels from this period onwards. One section remained in the mainstream while another section opted for the underground revolutionary terrorist movement. Many youths joined the *Anusilan Samity*, *Yugantar* and other groups which believed in the power of the gun and the bomb in overthrowing imperialism. As Gautam Chattopadhyay has pertinently pointed out, "almost all the cadres of the revolutionary movement in Bengal, including the martyrs, Khudiram, Kanailal, etc. were mostly teenaged students."[31] But their's is a different story. This paper shall be concerned only with the mainstream student movement.

The Non-Co-operation Movement and Indian Students

The success of the Swadeshi Movement was a great victory for the nationalists. They had indeed unsettled the settled fact. Meanwhile the First World War broke out and the British promised freedom in exchange for Indian co-operation in the war. After the war, the British went back on their promise. Repression was legalised by the Rowlatt Act and state terrorism on an unparalleled scale was launched to break the back of the nationalist movement in general and the revolutionary movement in particular, climaxing in the Jallianwalabagh massacre (April 4, 1919). This act of barbarism, of imperialism at its zenith firing on an unarmed crowd, made the

Indians more grim in their resolve to overthrow imperialism at all costs. And the students again appeared as the main strike force of the national movement. Attempts at co-ordinating the student movement at the national level was made by organizing All-India Student Conferences. The All-India Student Conference at Nagpur in 1920 decided to suspend studies. When Gandhiji gave a call for non-co-operation, the students of Bengal were the first to respond. In January 1921, the students of Vidyasagar College, Calcutta, responded *en masse* and offered satyagraha. On January 20, there was a complete strike in all schools and colleges of Calcutta. About 3000 students marched to Mirjapur (now Shraddhananda Park) and declared : "We shall not go back to our classes until Swaraj is won." When the Prince of Wales visited Calcutta in 1921, the students greeted him with black flags. Thus we find that during the Non-co-operation Movement, the students devoted themselves heart and soul to make it a success. All over the country, the students boycotted educational institutions and contributed to the success of hartals and other demonstrations. This first mass movement nearly succeeded in bringing about the fall of imperialism in India, but Gandhi's sudden calling off of the movement after the Chauri Chaura outrage (1922) saved the day for the British. Altbach pointed out that the articulate and militant nationalism of the Congress appealed to the students because it provided an opportunity for dramatic political action and promised speedy independence for India.[28]

The ABSA and Civil Disobedience

A major step in province-wide co-ordination of the student movement took place in September 1928, when the *All-Bengal Student Association (A.B.S.A.)* was established. This was the first effective student organization in India on a provincial level and inspired the formation of other organizations in other provinces of India. Thus the *Bombay Presidency Students Federation* was established in 1936. It helped to bring ideological politics to local and provincial levels. The A.B.S.A. under the leadership of its President, Promode Kumar Ghoshal, and its General Secretary, Birendranath

Gupta, dedicated itself to pursue the following programmes at its first meeting —

(1) Establishment of free Day and Night Schools for imparting elementary education to poor students and the working class.

(2) Establishment of a Volunteer Corps at Calcutta and its branches in the districts.

(3) Establishment of a Workers' Training College.

(4) Establishment of study circles, libraries and reading rooms.

(5) Establishment of a free Hindi school.

(6) Maintenance of the journal *Chhatra.*

(7) Establishment of Physical Culture Centres.

(8) Collection of important data concerning village life.

(9) Arrangement for an All-India Students' Tournament.

(10) Carrying on active propaganda for the organization of district students' associations.[88]

The A.B.S.A. played a leading role in the anti-Simon demonstrations on January 12, 1929, and organized another demonstration on January 19. That year, however, saw a split in the association. A new organization was formed by the dissidents — the *Bengal Presidency Students Association (B.P.S.A.)* at the Mymensingh Annual Conference. Abinash Chandra Roy was elected President and Kumud Lal Bhattacharya, the General Secretary. The unfortunate split was indeed a "crippling blow", as Amarendranath Roy noted, but the effect was mitigated during the Civil Disobedience Movement, when the two organizations worked jointly.

The thirties saw the student movement take many steps forward. It brought about an intensification of the political struggle. Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 involved students on a scale that was unprecedented. Strikes against college authorities occurred almost weekly in many parts of India. And they were resorted to exclusively for political purposes. Students not normally concerned with political issues were attracted to the dramatic nationalist struggle. Thousands served short jail sentences for their part in the

struggle and many left college to work on the education and social service projects of Gandhiji, as also in the labour movement.

In Bengal, the movement was led by a Joint Committee of the A.B.S.A. and the B.P.S.A. Among the many firsts created in Bengal was the women students strike in Bethune College in protest against police atrocities on the demonstrators protesting against the Simon Commission. From Chittagong in the east to Midnapore in the west, all Bengal was astir from 1930 to 1934 and the student masses braved the brutal terror let loose upon them to keep the flag of revolt flying. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it "Bengal presented the most extra-ordinary spectacle. Government treated the whole population as hostile ... Large areas seemed to be in a continuous state of siege ... India went through this fierce fire of repression, but the Frontier Province and Bengal suffered most." Large numbers of students participated in picketing educational institutions and they had to suffer various forms of molestation at some Calcutta Colleges like Bethune College, Presidency College and Scottish Church College. Within the campus of Dacca University, for example, a student, Ajit Bhattacharya, was beaten to death. Nevertheless, the students picketed foreign cloth, liquor and other shops. The journal of the A.B.S.A , *India Tomorrow*, continued to carry on a sustained campaign of Civil Disobedience till it was proscribed. The A.B.S.A. retaliated with clandestine literature.

The Emergence of the A.I.S.F. and Student Participation in the Quit India and Other Movements

The calling off of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1933 led to great disappointment among the student militants. In the jails and at home, they underwent a process of severe heart searching between the years 1934-1936. They felt the tremendous strength of the mass-struggles and realised the futility of heroic but isolated armed actions. At the same time they were angry at the timidity of the Gandhian leadership.

This period witnessed the growth of socialist ideas. The fledgeling Communist Party of India, though an illegal organization, enjoyed considerable influence. The Meerut trials added to the

prestige of the Communists. Many revolutionaries embraced Marxism. Bhagat Singh's *Why I am an Atheist*, for example, demonstrates the influence of Marxism over him. It was under these circumstances that the decision to establish an all-India student body was taken. On 12th and 13th August, 1936, an All-India Student Conference met under the Chairmanship of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. It was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru. The All-India Students' Federation was born. Though the initiative to establish the A.I.S.F. came from the Communists, people from all beliefs could join. In this conference, 26 proposals were adopted. The objectives of the A.I.S.F. were spelt out. These were as follows :

(1) Equal encouragement should be given to all students from different provinces for exchange of ideas and culture.

(2) To give suggestions for improvement of the present day education system.

(3) To preserve the rights of the student community.

(4) To prepare the students for future citizenship responsibilities and arouse social, economic, political consciousness so that they might be able to contribute their mite to the freedom struggle.[24]

In addition, many demands covering educational and political issues were made. The formation of the A.I.S.F. was a historic achievement. For the first time, student activism become institutionalised at an all-India level. For several years, the A.I.S.F. provided an umbrella organization for students where Gandhians, Socialists, Communists and other elements harmoniously worked together. The A.I.S.F. journal, *The Student*, provided a radical viewpoint on many social and political issues.

At this time several currents existed along with the mainstream student movement. The *All India Muslim Students' Federation* (1930) was affiliated to the *Muslim League* of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The *Hindu Students' Federation* was affiliated to the *Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh*. Thus we find that communalism also influenced students, though this tendency was not a threat to the mainstream nationalist movement.

The 1940s opened with a vertical split in the A.I.S.F., which "indicated some of the problems of the growing ideological sophistication of the student movement."[25] The rift occurred because of the growing differences between the Communists and the Nationalists. The *Students' Congress* emerged from this split. Differences within the student movement further widened when the Communists chose to stay away from the Quit India Movement in 1942. The Communists' contention was that the Second World War had become a peoples' war with the entry of the Soviet Union in the war, hence Indians should support the British war effort. The Nationalists thought otherwise and launched the Quit India Movement, which involved students on a large scale. According to one estimate, 15,000 students, i.e. about 10 per cent of the student population, were involved in the daily organizational work of the National Movement.[26] We find students participating in sabotage campaigns, disrupting the administrative machinery and acting as liason men, even operating a clandestine radio station. They braved police and military bullets, suffering heavy casualties in the process. In Bengal, the students observed a complete general strike at all schools and colleges, despite police firing and wanton repression. Nearly a score of students laid down their lives in Bengal [27]

The post-1942 phase was also marked by heroic actions on the part of the students. We find that under the leadership of the A.I.S.F., the student community went to the succour of the famine-hit people of Bengal in 1943. Later, the students fought the British shoulder to shoulder with the working class on the twin issues of the RIN Mutiny and release of the INA prisoners.[28] *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* characterised this as "an uprising of the people." Thirdly, when on the eve of India's independence, communal riots broke out, the students worked whole-heartedly to patch up communal animosities.

Student Activism in Independent India (1947-1987)

Student activism in the colonial period was the result of the reaction of the students to the tyrannical rule of the one colonial power, Britain. The withdrawal of the colonial power and the emergence of an independent India gave the student movement a

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new direction. It has been claimed that the post-independence
phase of the student movement was marked by confusion. Altbach,
for example, has claimed that the student movement has been unable
to regain its sense of militant unity and ideological purpose,[29]
"Students have not ceased to participate in politics but there has
been a dramatic transformation of their movement. The nationalist
fervour of the pre-independence period has been replaced by
generally unorganized and sporadic agitation usually aimed at
specific grievances."[30] The issues prior to independence, according
to Altbach, were clear, but the issues after independence were
confused. Conservative elements achieved substantial power, while
the radicals were forced into opposition. The spirit of individual
self-sacrifice disappeared and politics became more and more career-
oriented.[31] There is a large element of truth in these observations.
But despite these factors, the student movement did have specific
aims. The aims of the student movement during this phase, natu-
rally, were different from those prior to independence.

Organized student activism in India arose out of the problems
post-independence India faced. While socialism was spelt out as
the goal of Indian planning, in reality a capitalist society developed
in India Consequently, we find (a) the increasing pauperization
of the masses, (b) concentration of wealth in a few hands, (c) growth
of massive unemployment, (d) food crisis and industrial recession,
(e) uneven development of different regions, (f) an expanding
and ever expensive educational system. A. R. Desai observed that
the Congress aroused the hopes of the masses who had dreamt for
decades that Independence would bring solutions to their funda-
mental problems of food, shelter, clothing, employment and other
amenities of life, that a social welfare state would come about. But
in the attempt to maintain both capitalism and assure democracy,
the Congress created a contradictory situation which it could only
solve either by abolishing capitalism or by curtailing the democratic
rights of the masses, who began to challenge the very foundations
of the Indian state. The Congress opted for the latter.[32] The
students joined the masses in their struggle to preserve democratic
rights and to extend them. The focus shifted from ousting the alien
government to fight for democratic rights and fundamental free-
doms, to combat authoritarian onslaughts of the central and state

governments on existing rights, and to support the genuine demands
of the oppressed.

Student Activism in the 50s & 60s

Immediately after independence, the students participated in
several mass movements. Thus within just 11 days after indepen-
dence, on 26th August, 1947, 70,000 students joined workers and
other citizens numbering 2·5 lakhs in a massive anti-communal rally
in Calcutta.[33] Earlier, in June 1947, the A.I.S.F. adopted a resolu-
tion on the future course of the student movement. Among the aims
stated were improvement of educational facilities and their democra-
tization, upholding of the glorious heritage of the Indian student
movement at the international level, and the unification of the
student movement if the Indians were to capture state power by
June 1948.[34]

During the period 1947-50 we find the State and the people
increasingly coming into conflict and sanguinary battles taking place.
The Student estimated that from 15th August, 1948 to 15th August,
1949, there were at least 60 police firings. They included both
firings on peasants and workers as well as students.[35] Without
going into details, it would be sufficient to point out that the
students devoted themselves to several pressing issues, including the
problems of refugees, the problems of workers and peasants and the
problems of education. The educational system naturally affects the
students the most. And hence its improvement became a major
concern for the students. The A.I.S.F. demanded on behalf of the
student community, increase in expenditure over education both by
the central and state governments, the use of the mother tongue as
a medium of instruction, and the free and compulsory education to
all up to the age of 14 years. Movements were launched against
tuition fee increases. It was estimated that just within two years,
the tuition fees in colleges and universities increased by 100-150%,
and in the schools, fees increased by at least 25%.[36] The A.I.S.F.,
inspite of being a proscribed organization at that time, provided
good leadership to the student movement at this stage.

The national leaders were not prepared to let students parti-
cipate in political activity after independence. Hence efforts were

made to build a non-political students. organization. In 1950, the
National Union of Students was inaugurated. The Congress was its
sponsor. This organization was not successful. Inadequate finan-
cing, student apathy, difficulty of communication in a rapidly expan-
ding educational set up, proved to be insurmountable obstacles.
Besides, there were the problems of outside manipulation and
factional disputes. By 1958, the NUS was already dead. The
National Council of University Students in India, which was formed
to succeed the NUS, faced the same problems as its predecessor and
doubts have been expressed whether it will ever become a represen-
tative student organization of India.[87] The *Youth Congress;* formed
in 1949, also failed to draw political-minded youth and serves mainly
as a front for aspiring Congress politicians. We also find the
Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of the Jana Sangh, which has
apparently concentrated on a cultural programme avoiding broader
political issues.

In the fifties, the students also fought many political battles in
alliance with the working class, peasantry and the intelligentsia.
Thus in West Bengal, we find students protesting against the increase
in tramfares in 1953, and supporting the school teachers' demands
for better conditions of service (1954). In 1956, the students in
West Bengal demonstrated their solidarity with the Goan freedom
fighters. In 1959, they protested against the undemocratic dismissal
of the first Communist ministry in Kerala. Most significant was
their role in the food agitation in 1959. On the 1st of September
1959, the students demonstrated in support of the peasants, who
had earlier demanded the resignation of the Food Minister of West
Bengal. Near famine conditions provided the spark for this demon-
stration. The police ruthlessly opened fire, killing 4 students. Since
that day, September 1, is observed in West Bengal as *Student
Martyrs Day*. Again, 1952 marked a milestone in the history of the
student movement in Bengal when, through their own efforts, the
students organized the *Students' Health Home* in Calcutta to give the
poor and needy students medical aid. A new turn was given to the
people's health movement.

The sixties witnessed one of the most stormy periods of student
activism. Besides, it witnessed two unfortunate splits within the

Communist movement. During this period, the Leftist students took a very active role in many popular movements. Food crisis, industrial recession, unemployment and a general price rise led to grievances which burst forth only to be met with brutal police repression. Students took their rightful place in the front ranks of the mass movements and they bore the brunt of repression. For example, when on 16th February, 1966, a procession of school students demonstrated in the front of the SDO Office, at Basirhat, 24 Parganas, in West Bengal, it was lathi charged and fired on by the police with the result that Nurul Islam, a teenaged school student, was killed. Many more such cases may be cited. Altbach estimated that 2,206 student demonstrations took place in 1966 alone, of which 408 were violent. During this period, the students supported a host of movements. Thus the Calcutta students supported the movements of the tram workers and factory workers of Calcutta, teaching and non-teaching staff of the educational institutions in West Bengal. Two major victories for students in West Bengal may be noted in passing. The students of the Political Science Department of Calcutta University in 1967 won their fight for a more scientific syllabus which would include many new items which had hitherto keen neglected. Besides the students of Presidency College won their right to organize political activities in the campus.

Apart from intra-mural and national and regional aspects, the student movement in West Bengal was given an international dimension. The U.S.A.'s role in Vietnam had come in for strong criticism both from the American studentry and the students of other countries. West Bengal did not remain immune from this trend. The students organized a strike in solidarity with Vietnam on 5th July, 1966. On 20th July, they organized an anti-imperialist strike. Here, the anti-colonial dimension of Indian student activism became manifested.

Apart from West Bengal, student movements also occurred in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. The students of these states concentrated on issues like corruption, language policy, creation of new states, but failed to create permanent organizational structures. Thus, in 1965, the students in Tamil

Nadu organized a violent movement against the use of Hindi, India's national language. The DMK strongly supported the students and the 1965 agitation paved the way for assumption of power by the DMK. However, no continuing student organization developed in Tamil Nadu. In Bihar, the faction-ridden politics prompted the students to play off one faction against the other and keeping the academies in a state of turmoil. In Orissa, in 1964, the normally quiet students forced the resignation of the Chief Minister, who, they alleged, was guilty of corruption. In Andhra Pradesh, the students were involved in the Telengana agitation, while in Maharashtra, they took part in the *Samyukta Maharashtra* agitation. In Uttar Pradesh, they became involved in academic crises in the campus.

In this period, very unfortunately, two major splits occurred in the monolithic Communist movement. In the first place, when the Sino-Indian conflict broke out in 1962, serious differences of opinion on the nature of the war developed in the Communist Party. One section claimed that China was the aggressor, and Nehru should be given all the support he needed. Another section refused to call China the aggressor and denied support to Nehru. The irreconcilable differences ultimately led to a vertical split within the Communist Party with consequent effects on the student movement. The second split came in 1969, when intra-party differences in the CPI (M), one of the two Communist Parties, over the character of the bourgeoisie, tactics of struggle — i.e. parliamentary path or armed revolution, and strategy and tactics of the revolution, ultimately paved the way for the split. The CPI (ML) which wanted to follow a more radical path emerged. It led the Naxalite movement.

Student Activism and the Naxalite Movement
(late sixties and early seventies)

In the recent history of India, the Naxalite movement is one of the most significant in the sense that for the first time an attempt was made to overthrow capitalism by violent means. The time for revolution was however not apt, as the masses were not prepared for an ultra-radical programme like the one followed by Charu Majumdar and his associates. Besides, the bourgeois state was too

strong to be challenged effectively. Hence the movement failed. The Naxalbari movement derives its name from Naxalbari village, in north Bengal, where a peasant revolt took place in the sixties. For the peasants, it was definitely a "flicker of hope" despite the violence and bloodshed, since it was the only way in which they could secure land, land reforms having proved ineffective in distributing land.

Later, the movement relied heavily on youth power to sustain it. Charu Majumdar was very much influenced by the thought of Mao Tse-tung and his Cultural Revolution, which made extensive use of youth power as its front paw. Charu Majumdar sought to build up a cadre of "Red Guards" in the Chinese style, who would spread the revolution in the countryside. He soon found recruits in the extreme left section of the students, the BPSF(L), which had become extremely popular among students, capturing 65% of the college student unions.[38] But Charu Majumdar's order to boycott the unions split the movement. A section led by Dilip Majumdar ignored the order and this led to a split in the movement. This order was criticised both by former participants and present-day students who toe the Naxalite line. Thus the Democratic Students' Centre accuses Charu Majumdar of following a one-sided policy of ignoring the possibility of using the unions in a revolutionary manner.[39] Dipanjan Roychoudhury holds that this policy of boycott enabled the police to launch a reign of terror and helped the Congress hooligans to capture the unions.[40] Anyway, the policy of withdrawal from mass organizations like college unions was suicidal to the cause of the movement as it effectively isolated the revolutionaries from the masses and enabled the state to bring its full power to bear on the movement. But the students were not to blame for this left-wing adventurism. Many brilliant students threw away lucrative careers for the sake of building a new, exploitationless social order. This has been demonstrated by Sugata Dasgupta and his associates in *The Great Gherao of 1969*. Many students had told him and his associates that they did not join politics out of any academic frustration. They came solely to help build a new social order radically different from the present rotten one. But the adventurist policies of the elders drove these youths astray.

Student Activism in the Mid-seventies

The mid-seventies witnessed an organized student movement go hand in hand with a wider political movement launched by the opposition parties to dislodge the government of Mrs. Indira Gandhi from power. According to Jayram, "it was only in 1974 that the student agitations started manifesting the characteristics of an articulated movement".[1] The movement originated in Gujarat, spread to Bihar and later was transformed into a countrywide movement.

In the early seventies, rampant inflation, combined with scarcity of essential commodities created an explosive political situation. It was reported that between 1971-72 and 1973-74 the per capita availability of foodgrains fell by 11% and industrial production stagnated, whereas the wholesale price index rose by 33%, the per capita income declined by 42%. During 1972-73, prices of foodgrains, edible oil, vegetables and meat rose by 30 to more than 100%. Such essential commodities as rice, wheat, cooking oil and kerosene became scarce.[42] The people were thus put to untold hardship and expressed their discontent through strikes and demonstrations which were brutally suppressed by the state. During the first half of 1973 the army was called out in aid of civil power for a record 17 times.[43]

The students soon emerged as the vanguard of popular movements. In Gujarat, a dispute over higher mess bills at an Ahmedabad engineering college soon snowballed into a violent movement engulfing the entire Gujarat, thanks to inept handling of the situation by the government. The students forced the government to resign and the dissolution of the Assembly on March 17, 1974 was a major victory for them. The *Navanirman Samity*, which led the movement, comprised an alliance of both the right-wing students of the Jana Sangh and the Socialist students with the support of the Congress(O). The significance of student power was realised by Jayaprakash Narayan who led the youth of Bihar against what he thought to be a corrupt government.

In Bihar, the same coalition of political forces, which had been seen in Gujarat, launched a peaceful struggle on Gandhian lines

under the direction of Jayaprakash Narayan in 1974. The movement, under the banner of *Chhatra Sangharsh Samity,* picketed the Assembly, and boycotted classes and examinations. The students kept up the spirit of resistance alive against a massive show of force by the state.

The Gujarat elections in June 1975, clearly showed that the Congress had reached the nadir of its popularity when the Janata Front defeated the Congress at the hustings. Meanwhile, a further setback for Mrs. Gandhi was her defeat in an election petition when the Allahabad High Court unseated her in June 1975. To crush dissent, Mrs. Gandhi declared a state of "internal" emergency on June 26.

The government now took various measures to stifle the student movement. They included the arrest, detention and torture of student leaders sympathetic to the opposition, depoliticization of the unions, attempts to break the unity of the students by unduly favouring the backward classes and in some states like Maharashtra, ordinances were imposed to drastically reorganize the functioning of the universities. The courses were semesterised in order to keep the students busy with course work and examinations. However, the students still kept up the spirit of dissent alive and resisted the efforts of the government to browbeat them into submission. In Jawaharlal Nehru University, a resistance movement developed which was led by the SFI. In Delhi University, it was led by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad. A notable feature of this period was the rise of the Youth Congress under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi's son, Sanjay. Under his patronage it acquired undue recognition but finally it could not hold on to its new found power. In the 1977 elections, it secured less than 10 nominations in place of the 200 it demanded, but failed to win any.

The Janata Period

The 1977 elections were historic since for the first time the Congress lost control over both the Centre and the States. And, as Jayram pointed out, the students played a crucial role in the defeat of the ruling Congress government and the election of the first alternative government in the political history of India since

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independence.[41] The end of Emergency however did not see the end
of campus activism. Mention may be made of the Marathwada riots
(1978) which started over the renaming of the Marathwada Univer-
sity in Maharashtra after Ambedhkar. The Pantnagar Agricultural
University incident (1978) was precipitated over a strike action by
the farm workers. The uniqueness of the incident lay in the
fact that· students and teachers also joined the struggle. "Perhaps
this is the first instance in which the intelligentsia came out
of its closed circle to join the workers' struggle, thus heralding a
new trend in campus activism."[45] Some other significant incidents
may be mentioned in passing. In Hyderabad, students went on
strike in September 1978 for their demand to remove a woman
Minister who had "degraded Indian women publicly". In 1979,
students throughout Tamil Nadu went on strike in sympathy with
striking teachers. And in Pondicherry, 4000 students organized a
procession to protest against the proposal to merge Pondicherry with
Tamil Nadu. Internal dissensions broke up the Janata Party and by
1980 Mrs. Gandhi returned to·power with a massive mandate.

Student Activism in the Eighties : the rise of reactionary movements

The eighties opened with gloomy forebodings for the future of
India. The rise of several reactionary trends in the student move-
·ments during this period marks the beginning of a dark chapter in
the history of India's student movement. Two movements — The
Assamese and the Khalistani movements—involved participation of
the students. The main cause behind these two movements was low
industrial development of these two states of India. The low indus-
trial development resulted in unemployment and underemployment
on a large scale among the educated youths and their frustration
resulted in their going ,astray and joining the ranks of linguistic
chauvinists and religious fundamentalists. As Rudolph Gyan
D'Mello rightly pointed out : "The unemployed, whatever their
economic condition, are focal points of tension in society. When
unemployment is fuelled by the educated, the situation can become
potentially inflammable."[46] Our country has 26 million people out
of work at present, according to latest reports.[47] West Bengal, itself
a highly industrialized state, has 4·24 million people out of work,
over half of whom are educated.[48] It is easy to imagine what the

situation would be in Punjab and Assam, which are industrially much less developed than West Bengal. The frustration of the youths in not finding suitable employment results in what Mao Tse tung termed "a counter-current in the youth movement".[49] Any movement that acts as the countercurrent is bound to fail in the long run, as we find that these movements divide the people by pitting one section of the people against another. They may succeed for a time but ultimately fail when people realise their sinister nature.

The Assam Movement (1979-1985)

The Assam movement owes its origin to a number of factors, including low economic development, the presence of a culturally superior minority and the foreign hand. The agitation was led by the *All Assam Students Union* (A.A.S.U.) and the *All Assam Gana-sangram Parishad* (A.A.G.S.P), two organizations specifically built to give direction to the movement, which took the form of cultural revivalism, political oppression of the minorities and economic blockade of the rest of India. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Bhrigu Phukan were the two top leaders who directed the movement.

Assam has one of the lowest *per capita* incomes. In 1976-77, its per capita income was Rs. 816/-, which was one of the lowest, as compared to the national average of Rs. 1.049.[50] The reason for this was the virtual absence of any industry on modern lines which can employ both the educated and the uneducated youth. The youths naturally became very much resentful of the lack of suitable jobs. Secondly, as K.M. Sharma pointed out, the British cleverly pursued a policy of diverting the nascent Assamese nationalism to an anti-Bengali path by firstly importing hardworking Bengali settlers to develop Assam agriculturally, and secondly making Bengali the official language.[51] The Bengalis, again, became convenient scapegoats for the chauvinists. Thirdly, as is evident from the American document 'Operation Brahmaputra', the presence of an imperialist conspiracy in fomenting the movement cannot be denied.[52]

Ostensibly, the Assamese movement began over an innocuous issue — the issue of citizenship. It was claimed that the huge influx from Bangladesh would swamp the Assamese, making them a

minority in their own land. In reality it was a ruse to force Bengalis
to flee Assam by unleashing untold oppression upon them. The
Bengalis found themselves sitting ducks—targets for attacks by AASU
agents. Overnight, they became refugees without a hearth and home.
As Hiren Gohain pointed out : "In the competitive capitalist envi-
ronment of our country, the Assamese petit bourgeoisie sees nothing
wrong in the idea that a race or nation can thrive only at the expense
of other races and nations"[58] With the slogan, *Jai ai Asom,*
the Assamese students emerged as the front paw of the Assamese
petit bourgeoisie's campaign for dominating Assam.

The Assamese chauvinists launched an intense and brutal cam-
paign against the Bengalis. The tribals, however, remained indiffe-
rent. The agitation was marked by a barbarism unheard of in inde-
pendent India. Wholesale pogroms of minorities took place in
remote places on the eve of the 1983 elections. This was in addition
to economic measures adopted by the chauvinists against the rest of
India, which, among other things, included picketing Indian Oil
installations and blocking the movement of tea and major and
minor forest products. It was in this atmosphere of intense political
confrontation between the Bengalis and Assamese that the *All Assam
Minorities' Students' Union* (AAMSU) was born to protect the inte-
rests of the minorities. The AAMSU, however, could not effecti-
vely protect the interests of the minorities. The nakedly partisan
role played by the Assamese administration in general and the police
in particular, ensured that the AAMSU could not emerge as a major
countervailing power. Several instances of police firing on peaceful
demonstrations by the AAMSU, resulting in several casualties, inclu-
ding deaths, can be found in the newsreports of that time. It was
in these circumstances, that the Government of India passed the
Armed Forces Special Powers Act and called the army to the aid of
civil power. The movement went on for sometime before the Assam
Accord was signed.

The Assam Accord (1985) further weakened the position of the
Bengalis, who have now to remain content with a second class status.
The success of "student power" in Assam was actually the success of
Assamese chauvinism. The plight of the Bengalis and tribals in
Assam became very clear when the new government of the *Asom*

Ganaparishad, which comprised of leaders of AASU and the AAGSP, launched a policy of cultural assimilation by making the study of Assamese in schools compulsory for the minorities. The move immediately became the subject of intense controversy. The minority students spearheaded a strong protest movement in the Barak valley. The government replied with police firings on largely peaceful processions, but ultimately had to suspend the policy in the face of severe public pressure. The Assamese tribals are now demanding a separate state.

Late 1987 again saw the AASU in a very militant mood. Assam has become embroiled in very serious boundary disputes with all its neighbours. In 1987, Assam unilaterally closed its borders with Arunachal Pradesh. In late 1987, on the eve of the Nagaland elections, the AASU economically blockaded Nagaland on some petty border issues. The situation threatened to turn into another bloody civil war like at Merapani in 1983, but the Prime Minister's firmness saved the situation and AASU withdrew its blockade.

The Khalistan Movement (1980)

The Khalistan movement is a product of two factors. On one hand it is the result of the political opportunism of the Congress (I). As Harkishen Singh Surjeet rightly noted : "The Congress Party never took a democratic stand either in the language issue or on Punjab's reorganization. It continued to exploit communal divisions to perpetuate itself in office."[54] It is well known that there is a wide gulf between the Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab and the Hindus depend on the Congress to protect them from the Akali Dal, who they fear, will over look their interests. But Zail Singh set the ball of fundamentalism rolling, when as Chief Minister, he turned the state machinery into an institution of *dharam prachar* and raised the Frankenstein of Bhindranwale, when during the Janata regime, he started using Bhindranwale to embarass the Akalis. Religious fundamentalism naturally had an appeal for youths, in a society where Gurudwara politics is the rule, and the *Sant,* a religious leader-cum-politician, commands respect. But there was a deeper underlying factor. That was economic frustration. The Green Revolution that had brought affluence to Punjab and stimulated the

demand for modern consumer goods has also led to the spread of
education among the Sikh youths, who were eager to utilise this
education and find new areas of investment and new vocations for
themselves.[55] Since the Planning Commission did not wish to
industrialise the state, 70% of the bank deposits in Punjab were
invested outside Punjab. Obviously, the educated Sikh youths
became greatly frustrated and felt discriminated against. And they
became victims of fundamentalist propaganda. The economic
frustration of the Sikh youths has also been recognised by the Sikh
legislators. A few months ago, a Committee of Sikh MPs asked
Rajiv Gandhi to create employment opportunities for the Sikh
youths in order to tackle terrorism.[56]

Terrorism in Punjab is openly anti-national in its thought and
deed. The avowed objective of all the terrorists — to whatever
group they belong to — is the same, the creation of Khalistan. The
terrorists have their bases in foreign countries like Pakistan, U.S.A.,
U.K. and Canada. They have usurped the Golden Temple, and
have sowed the seeds of dissention among the Hindu and Sikh
masses. The typical terrorist, sociologically, is a male aged 20-30,
having at least a partial university education, with an affluent
middle class family background, motivated by frustration or nihilist
notions.[57] Chandan Mitra points out that Punjab is now under-
going "emotional masochism", with the terrorist ideology beginning
to appeal to women, who are also joining their ranks. Commitment
to Khalistan is being measured by the physical commitment to
terrorist activity.[58]

The All India Sikh Students Federation (A.I.S.S.F.) plays a big
role in Sikh terrorism. It has its units in all the Sikh educational
institutions. It appeals to the hero-worshipping student youth of
Punjab, to whom the terrorists are not criminals, but freedom
fighters. Pictures of "martyrs" killed in police action are promi-
nently displayed in the Golden Temple office of the A.I.S.S.F.
Besides, the *bhog* ceremonies of terrorists killed in police action also
draw large crowds. These ceremonies are fertile recruiting grounds
for potential terrorists. That the A.I.S.S.F. occupies an important
place in the Khalistani movement can be gauged from the fact that
the President of the A. I. S. S. F. was a right-hand man of

Bhindranwale. The A.I.S.S.F. members also participate in terrorist activities.

It appears that Operation Blue Star was only a temporary setback to the terrorists. The November 1984 anti-Sikh riots and the failure to implement the Punjub Accord (1985) have further alienated the Sikh masses, especially the youth, who have been drawn towards Khalistan. No Rebeiro or Operation Blue Star can solve this problem. Only a bold, imaginative political approch can wean the Sikh youths away from this murderous politics. Efforts should be made to industrially develop Punjab to provide employment to the Sikh youths. Otherwise, as Chandan Mitra rightly points out : "., why should the misguided Sikh youth return to the mainstream when the mainstream has so little to offer" ?[59]

The Khasi Students Federation Movement (1987)

A reactionary movement, having ethnic overtones, which suddenly hit the headlines in 1987, was the movement of the Khasi students against the Nepalese in Meghalaya. The movement drew its inspiration from the success of "student power" in Assam to get rid of the Nepalese, who like the Bengalis in Assam, became sitting ducks for the Khasi agitationists, who turned them into refugees overnight. This movement had serious repercussions in another part of India, namely, north Bengal. It was largely responsible for giving a new lease of life to the Gorkhaland movement. It should be noted that the Gorkhaland movement began only after some Nepalese were expelled from the north east in 1986. Like the movements previously mentioned, the Khasi agitation too originated out of economic frustration.

West Bengal (1977-1987)

We conclude the history of the student movement in India by a review of the state of the student movement in West Bengal. The politics of West Bengal has taken a unique turn since 1977. The mass upsurge against the Congress (I), that took the form of a "ballot box revolution", also occurred in West Bengal. In 1977, the Left Front swept the polls and since then, West Bengal has not

seen any political change for the past ten years. While the "ballot box revolution" fizzled out in other states and with it the hopes of a viable alternative to the Congress, West Bengal stood solid as a rock when the Congress returned to power again in 1980. Since then the Left Front has been winning by bigger and bigger margins, reflecting the confidence of the masses in the government.

What has been the role of the student movement in West Bengal ? Philip G. Altbach once paid a compliment to the students of West Bengal when he said that "only West Bengal can claim an ideologically sophisticated and active student movement".[60] This remark was true when it was written. And it is also true now. All Left Front parties have student wings. But the most powerful is the *Students' Federation of India* (SFI), a frontal organization of the CPI(M). The SFI has played an important role in defending the gains of the "ballot box revolution" of 1977. The Left Front's reforms in the educational sphere have resulted in free education upto Class XII and it has also enabled students to participate in the decision-making bodies of the universities. The SFI's popularity in Calcutta University and other universities and also many colleges has greatly helped to restore the healthy atmosphere that was destroyed in the period 1972-1977. That period saw unrestrained corrupt practices in the educational field, including mass copying in examinations and the use of muscle power to win student union elections. The new government checked anarchy in education.

The main opponent of the SFI in West Bengal is the *Chhatra Parishad* (I). It is in total disarray and is not able to offer any pragmatic alternative policy to the SFI. Its organizational weakness reflects the weakness of its parent body, the Congress (I). Another important student body, which opposes the Left Front student bodies, is the *Democratic Students Organization* (DSO), the frontal organization of the *Socialist Unity Centre of India* (SUCI) which follows the left of centre policies laid down by Sibdas Ghosh. There are also other student organizations like the *All-Bengal Students' Association* (ABSA).

Apart from defending the achievements of the Left Front Government, the SFI and its allies have also taken to agitational politics whenever the occasion demands. Thus when Chancellor

A. P. Sharma appointed a new Vice-Chancellor for Calcutta University undemocratically, the Left Front students protested (1984). Again, they protested against the undemocratic Viswabharati Bill which sought to gag democracy in the Viswabharati campus. The SFI and its allias have also launched periodic movements against price rise, protest movements against the Centre's policies towards West Bengal, etc. In 1987, after the State Assembly elections, the SFI, in alliance with the Democratic Youth Federation (DYF), protested against biased news coverage in the *All India Radio* and *Doordarshan*. Recently, in December, 1987, the SFI threatened to gherao the Calcutta station of Doordarshan for airing highly partisan views of some Andhra youths on the Gorkhaland movement at a time when the talks with Gorkhas were at a crucial stage.

Conclusion

Thus we find that student activism in India started as a reaction to colonialism and in the process of evolution has attained the present state. As Altbach rightly notes : "India fulfils all of the preconditions for an active and potentially volatile student movement".[61] There are a myriad causes of student activism in India. Social, political psychological, economical and educational issues are all intertwined in Indian student activism. Violence is a distinctive characteristic. Outside political interference in the campus is another. Despite its overall progressive essence, certain areas have shown reactionary trends in this decade. As Saroj Mukherjee, the present Chairman of the Left Front Committee in West Bengal, has pointed out, the bourgeois mode of production, which distorts the society and economy, also distorts the attitude of youths who are by nature ready to help others and are unselfish.[62] The Assam, Khalistani and Khasi students movements are the result of distorted youth psychology. Let us hope that these students will outlive these aberrations and return to the mainstream to play the role which is historically theirs.

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QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH — AN ENQUIRY INTO THEIR COMPLEMENTARITY

KRISHNA CHAKRABORTTY*

In the present paper I shall focus on the need for combining qualitative and quantitative research methods in Sociology. I have described elsewhere (chakrabortty, 1988, Man and Life) what sociologists in India and abroad think on this issue. Here I shall concentrate on my own experiences and the lessons I have learnt from my studies carried out among (1) the middle class working mothers, (2) the under-graduate girl students in some colleges in Calcutta, (3) the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women in a village in the district of Burdwan, (4) the villagers in Baruipara, (5) book-binding workers in Calcutta, and (6) the post-graduate students of the University of Calcutta.

By *qualitative* method I refer to a series of research strategies, participant observation, and in-depth, unstructured and semi-structured interviewing. It includes all forms of study of society in natural settings by means of natural (relatively uncontrolled) social interaction (cf. Srinivas, 1966, p. 156 ; Moser and Kalton, 1971, p. 293 ; Katz, 1970, p. 57). This method allows researchers to get close to the social world and provides opportunities for them to derive the meaning of their concepts from the data that are gathered. Much research of this kind involves a phenomenological and interactionist perspective whereby researchers attempt to understand the meaning of events for people in particular situations. The focus is upon the way in which participants interpret their experience and construct reality. The ultimate aim is to study situations from the participants' point of view (Burgess, 1984, p. 3 ; Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979, p. 17).

The above methodological approach stands in contrast to the *objective* or *quantitative* approach which views the actor and his

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action from the perspective of an outside, detached observer. The definition provided by Fowler can be noted here. He stated the goal of *survey* in the following manner (1984, p. 9) :

(1) The purpose of the survey is to produce statistics — that is, quantitative or numerical description of some aspects of the study population.

(2) The main way of collecting information is by asking people questions ; their answers constitute the data to be analysed.

(3) Generally, information is collected from only a fraction of the population — that is, a sample-rather than from every member of the population.

Among the studies referred to above, only in the first instance (Chakrabortty, 1978) which I carried out as a Jr. UGC Research Fellow, I could apply quantitative and qualitative methods simultaneously. I started my research career with this study. At that time I had no experience of doing research, and what I had was only a thin idea about the sociological theories from which I could derive my research hypotheses. At the outset, I did not clearly know what I was looking for. I, did not of course, enter the field with blank minds and I set out on the frontiers of my personal knowledge and began exploring beyond those frontiers. Such an exploration demands an investment of many weeks' time in getting familiar with the social terrain and gaining acceptance by local people, which I could afford because of my fulltime and undisturbed immersion in my research. Also, the choice of the topic was mine and I had a deep personal interest in the theme. Technically speaking, although I was not a participant observer, I spent long two years with my research subjects and many a time I resorted to informal conversasions of long duration in terms of both hours and days with working mothers most of whom did not come within my designated sample. I tried to remain present in the gatherings where these people got assembled and conversed among themselves. My every attempt was to gain access to their life-patterns, and for this purpose I resorted to any means — formal or informal. As a result, I felt the urge for gaining access to their personal experiences to prepare case studies, side by side preparing tables dealing with data formally

collected from a designated sample consisting of 161 working mothers. In the tables I could show that the relationship between the indicated factors (independent variables) and the intensity of conflict in the situations mentioned was logically consistent. However, the fact that the indicated relationships were found to exist (some of whom were statistically significant) did not by themselves provide an understanding of the mechanisms involved in the relationships (inter-variable). Factors are too complex, numerous and intricately intermingled to be controlled or isolated from others while finding the association between any two variables. I felt, accordingly, "Under the circumstances, the statements and conclusions made above regarding the absence or presence of any association between various factors and the role conflict of working mothers, involve some degree of over-simplification, and these will be of some worth if they can initiate or help further and more extensive research in this field. Understanding that the conclusions of the present chapter are inadequate and indecisive, in the next chapter an attempt has been made to study the difficulties of working mothers more extensively, and the ways they have adopted to minimize or resolve their difficulties. The approach will be, what may be called, qualitative" (Chakrabortty, 1978, p. 139).

After the completion of this study I started my working life and joined as a lecturer in an undergraduate college in Calcutta. I, however, did not disconnect myself from the "field" and took up another study relating to women. This time I undertook a small survey among the girl college students (I carried out this project with two other fellows though the job of data collection was done by me ; Bhattacharyya, Roy and Chakrabortty, 1977 ; Bhattacharyya and Chakrabortty, 1980). My goal was to enquire into what these prospective working mothers were thinking about their future role and what their attitude was towards assuming the dual role obligations. As I was a full-time employee by this time, and could not be a whole-time researcher, I chose one such topic where inter-viewing as the method of data collection will be suitable. Accordingly, I decided to work on attitudes, values, beliefs, aspirations of the subjects, where one can depend on the self-reports provided by the respondents. When the survey ended, I came to realize that my knowledge about my subjects this time was much poorer than my

knowledge about the working mothers in whose case I could acquire an in-depth, close understanding and develop a feeling of empathy. I felt that I could not gain much insight into the problem of girl students. I raised certain questions and described the existing state of affairs but the analysis and interpretations I provided were mostly based on my perceptions and inferences. This was because, I think, I totally depended on the survey method and tried to maintain the detachment and objectivity required by science.

Being somewhat disappointed with the results of this survey, I next chose to work among the rural women. And this time I depended on observation and unstructured interviewing as my research tools (Bhattacharyya and Chakrabortty, 1978). The focus of study was to observe the part played by women or the position held by women in family decision-making. I devoted the vacations to data collection. I selected the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women in the village as these people were economically active and shared equal responsibilities with their men in providing for their families. Some of these women were customarily in this role (the Scheduled Tribes — Santals and Koras) and some were only recently taking up this role (Scheduled Caste — Bagdis). I tried to compare if there were any differences in the positions held by women in these communities. I assumed that because of their economic role, wives in these communities would enjoy some additional advantage over their middle class counterparts (who are mostly housewives solely). But I could not undertake that study because of lack of time. However, I got and developed an interest in this field. I felt that what I planned to do could not be achieved unless I could get rid of my teaching job and devote my full energy and time to my research. I, therefore, approached the UGC which granted me a Senior Research Fellowship in 1979. But unfortunately I could not avail myself of this opportunity as my university, which I joined in December, 1978, could not grant me the necessary leave of absence.

I, therefore, could not take the opportunity of working as a full-time researcher. I, however, realized that to reach the heart of the social realities, one has to be intimate with the field, spend months with the subjects, which would help in understanding the meanings

and motives of the actors behind their action and their perception, interpretation and inferences regarding the social realities. This means, to have an adequate and correct picture of the social realities, the observer must understand how the subjects (sometimes called actors, members or participants) make meaning of those events, in addition to studying those realities from a quantitative point of view. As prolonged leave from my place of work, which was necessary in conducting such observation, was not available, I decided to work in my native village from where I daily commute to the university. I worked jointly with Dr. S. K. Bhattacharyya who was my teacher and then colleague in the Department of Sociology, Calcutta University (Chakrabortty, 1982).

I first took a census of the village and then, with Bhattacharyya, began to informally converse with the villagers on diverse issues like the caste structure and practice in the village, intercommunal relationships, performance of rituals and festivals, occupational structure, inter-generational mobility in the fields of occupation and education, attitude towards girls' education, reasons behind high rate of drop-outs in schools, family structure and practices, the aspiration level of the villagers, power-structure in the village (panchayat system), village solidarity and factionalism, the kind of socio-economic changes brought about in the village, factors behind the changes and the results and dimension of change, and so on. Our objective was to find out the reasons behind the economic and educational backwardness of the villagers and the dynamics of change. We collected enormous information but most of the job was done informally. When we were in the field we did not show much concern for the reliability question. We mainly depended, instead, on our subjective understanding. But at the stage of writing the research report, we came to realize that we have learnt a lot, but as we could not delimit the focus of enquiry and collect and organize data in a systematic way, we were not in a position to communicate our feelings and interpretations formally to others. We felt the need for holding a systematic survey to supplement our qualitative understanding. But this attempt was foiled because of some unavoidable circumstances. Anyway, I realized that depth interviewing was not a substitute for systematic survey and that a student of Sociology requires to have proficiency in both the fields.

Since I joined the Department of sociology, I have been in charge of supervising the fieldwork of the M.A. students in the department. Each year students carried out a survey which was required as a partial fulfilment of their M.A. degree, and I had to supervise. Often I personally accompanied them to the field so as to enrich my capacity for guiding the students. I once decided to utilize this opportunity in pursuing my own research as well. Accordingly, in two consecutive sessions I directed my students to work among the book-binding workers in Calcutta — an urban informal sector. I found a few sincere students who appreciated my goal, but the venture could not produce much tangible result as the majority of students had neither the ability not motivation or aptitude for fieldwork. This was viewed by them as a compulsion or at best a routine job. So I left my plan for taking help from M.A. students and started on my own.

I conducted the survey in the same field taking a sample of 100 workers. My focus was to study their standard of living — details of food and dress articles they consumed, their budget and how they made their both ends meet, the aspiration level they had set for their children, their home surroundings, their recreation pattern, their working conditions, However, as I proceeded with my data collection through interviewing, I noted that respondents were used to answer my questions in a stereo-typed manner, and that data were lacking in variation. In the informal discussions these people confided a lot, but when they were formally interviewed they withdrew or suppressed many such information. For example, in personal conversations many of them revealed that they were in perpetual debt, that they could not consume rice, wheat, pulse and edible oil on all the seven days of a week, that had to take *chhatu* at least on two days of a week, which even was not available always and they had to starve occasionally, that their women worked as maids to supplement their very inadequate and irregular income, and the like experiences. But when I started to fill up the interview schedules these people answered from a normative point of view, that means, they stated what they *should* have consumed rather than what they *actually* consumed. I realized that they were suppressing facts, but what to do then ?

Possibly a cursory visit to their place of work where they were to
sit in close physical proximity with others and had no provision for
maintaining privacy and secrecy, such detailed and intimate infor-
mation cannot be obtained.   Moreover, these people mostly worked
on piece-rate basis.   So they were to lose financially when talking
to me.   And when they worked on a wage-basis, their employer
objected to "wasting" time with me.   So even when they were
willing to cooperate, they were helpless.   I realized that to know
what I was trying to know, I should have spent more time in
earning their confidence and friendliness, for which my visit to their
place of residence was a must.   But I could not pay that visit
because of my being a full-time employee.

In the year 1983 I got a grant of Rs. 5,000/- from the University
of Calcutta to conduct a survey among the P.G. students. I focussed
on students' background (to have a picture about whether and
how much elitism is being practised in the sphere of higher
education) and their attitude towards the system of education in the
university — University administration, teachers and students' union
(Chakrabortty, 1985).   I hired five investigators (all of whom were
my students and were M.A.'s in Sociology) for the purpose of data
collection.   Also, I myself managed time to join with them in data
collection.   This occasion gave me the experience of project work
with hired investigators. My survey instrument was a semi-structured
interview schedule. I directed my investigators to look for, whenever
possible and suitable, concrete illustrations rather than simple
statements of attitude from the respondents.   For example, when a
respondent said that teachers were not sincere, I asked them to
probe for a concrete occasion which appeared to that respondent as
a mark of insincerity on the part of teachers, whether this type of
behaviour was common on the part of teachers in general or whether
it was the style of one or two teachers, whether he observed such
behaviour in relation to his class mates as well, etc. My investigators
possibly tried their best to "please me", but, what I feel, they did
not have that kind of commitment to and understanding of the
research theme, which I had.   They thought that it was "her" (i.e.,
Krishna Chakrabortty's) research and could not get themselves
involved in the project beyond a certain point.   Yet as I was in the
field through the total period of data collection and myself interacted

with respondents on many occasions, I acquired at least some understanding of the problem, which I could not get, I am afraid, if I were to be aloof from the field and looked at it only through the eyes of the investigators. Yet, I feel, in the absence of prolonged and intimate involvement with the field, which was caused by my commitment to my place of work, the understanding of the problem was only partial, one-sided, inadequate and incomplete. On the whole, I am not much satisfied with this kind of work, and I think that my report could be more useful and interesting if I could supplement my quantitative assessment of the situation with some amount of observation (observation of the groups where students were chatting, or discussing among thamselves).

None of the later studies has given me that amount of satisfaction and confidence which I got from my first study (where I could apply both quantitative and qualitative methods). At that time I was totally inexperienced in the field. By this time I have been more experienced and have acquired some knowledge and skill in the use of research methods and techniques. Yet I feel that my contribution to this field of learning has not been enriched to that extent. I think when we are established professionals, with teaching and other professional responsibilities, we are unlikely to have the time and the motivation to make such a full commitment to research and to get ourselves immersed in the field, as may be done by young people during their days in the university. The problem becomes acute if we are to divide our time, energy and attention between teaching and research. I am not speaking here about the incompatibility of these two roles (research demanding specialization and depth understanding while teaching, breadth and versatility of knowledge) but the practical difficulties in combining the two jobs.

My experience of research in Sociology has taught me that case study and statistical methods, the understanding of the process and the dynamics of change through qualitative means, and the measurement of the social realities through quantitative techniques are not substitutes for, rather supplementary to, each other. The two methods serve two distinct and equally useful purposes for Sociology.

Quantitative method helps to delineate any trend or pattern from amongst the apparently unconnected and independent happenings.

From the Structuralist perspective, this apparatus will not help if one
wants to explain what happens for any single case, but will be
helpful in explaining general social tendencies in a population of
such cases. In qualitative analysis, one can measure the relative
strength of various factors with some precision, but there will be
many deviant cases that are not explained by the factors considered.
One will find here lots of cases deviating from the tested hypotheses,
and these are simply assumed to be due to other variables consi-
dered, variables not considered, and random errors. The analyst
simply puts these 'deviant' cases in a residual group, and only rarely
takes the pains to inspect for new factors to explain them. With a
case study approach, on the other hand, one is more likely to look
into detail at deviant cases and perhaps come up with new ideas
and hypotheses. That is why, to have a more complete and
vivid picture of the reality, one has to apply qualitative methods
as well.

What is deplorable is the tendency to make a fetish of quantita-
tive techniques ; the real men and women, the flesh and blood, are
then lost sight of. Again, one will like to know what is happening
in the wider milieu — the milieu that is not exhausted by the
immediate experience of specific men and women. Uptil now both
the standpoints attract me.

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SATI — AN EXAMPLE OF ALTRUISTIC SUICIDE ?

GAYATRI BHATTACHARYYA*

P. V. Kane observed in his *magnum opus, History of Dharmasastras*, "This subject (of Sati of Suttee) is now of academic interest in India, since for over a hundred years (i.e., from 1829) self-immolation of widows has been prohibited by law in British India and has been decided to be a crime ... ... We are now in a position to take a dispassionate view of the practice ... ..." (1974 : 624). It is the irony of history or rather of the Hindu tradition that both the expectations of the great savant have been shockingly belied by the fateful event at Deorala in Rajasthan where Roop Kanwar, an 18-year old girl was burnt to death on the funeral pyre of her husband in presence of the countless people accompanied by the full panoply of Rajput valour. The subject has not yet been reduced to a matter of academic interest simply, nor is it a fact that even today people, thinking people, can take a dispassionate view of the same.

Roop Kanwar's death as a Sati drew the attention of the people at large that it was *not an isolated incident* but only one in a series that sought to rejuvenate the practice of Sati in the Sekhawati region which lies close to Jaipur district. What is interesting to note is that there were very few Satis in Rajputana Agency during the period 1818-1873 and Jaipur was the first of 18 states of the Rajputana Agency to abolish Sati and make it a penal offence (1846), since the leading chieftains of the area, i.e., Shekhawati chieftains, had given their public assent to the abolition legislation, the incidents of Sati became only sporadic in nature and the practice had ceased to have socio-religious significance attached to it.

The present revival has been led by the three upper castes of the area — the Rajputs, the Mahajans and Banias (drawn from sub-castes belonging to the local Agarwal trading community) and Brahmans, Bhats and Charans. The members of the last-mentioned

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caste category invested widow immolation with heroic valour and religious merit. The Brahmans as priest gave it religious sanction while the Bhats and Charans as bards and genealogists gave it a place within the 'glories' of the family history and Rajput 'custom' and 'tradition'. It is not accidental that the so-called 'living Sati' at Devipura (prevented in 1985) asked instructions from a guru at Triveni temple located at a stone's throw from the village, that a guru from the same temple was also associated with a sati at Hathideh (1977) or that a priest who officiated at the Sati at Jhadli (1979) and wrote booklets glorifying the ideal of 'sati mata' maintained connections with both the Hathideh family and the Triveni *math*. It may be noted, Deorala is located only a few kilometers from the math.

The vested interests — economic and political — of the Marwari community of the region comprising Ramgarh, Sikar, Lakshmangarh, Fatehpur, Nawalgarh and Jhunjhunu, particularly in the districts of Sikar and Jhunjhunu prompted the "rediscovery" and rebuilding of medieval sati shrines which in turn have been since 1947 accompanied by the rash of widow immolations in the same area.

For example, the Rani Sati Temple at Jhunjhunu, the most notable one of such temples, which commemorates self-immolation of Rani or Narayani Devi, a lady belonging to the Agarwal community, had, according to the Census of India 1961, started an annual mela and began to be looked after by a managing committee planning minor expansions in 1912. The main gate was completed in 1936 but the *mundhs* were not converted into temples until 1956 (i.e., two years after the first sati incident in the village of Madhav-ka-Vas in this area). The trust currently managing this temple complex is privately controlled by Marwari Agarwals from Bombay and Calcutta and the Rani Sati Sarva Sangha has helped to build all over India. 105 temples which consolidate a formidable network of donors within the trading manufacturing community. It was in the post-Independence period that the huge temple complex dedicated to Rani Sati, still under-going expansion, acquired its present shape. During the same period the annual mela was revived and the first Rajput Sati in Sikar district occurred. A Rani Sati Girls' Primary School was started in 1961

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near the temple   In 1986, a new section to the temple and a 51 kilo
gold *kalas* were added.   In addition, a month-long Shashtra Chandi
. Mahayagna was conducted by a large number of priests.   The State
Governor was one of the VIPs to bless the activities.

    The Rani Sati Temple at Jhunjhunu does not contain a single
picture of anyone enveloped in flames and the Rani Sati Sarva
Sangha professes to have been opposing widow immolation and even
declares its readiness to help prevent it.   But when "we visited the
temple", reports Kumkum Sangari, "booklets glorifying Kotdi Sati
(which occurred in the 1970s), Rani Sati, and picture prints of
Rani Sati as a woman on a burning pyre holding her husband on
her lap were selling at a rapid rate " (1987 : 25)

    Sudesh Vaid's analysis of the event of Sati in the village of
Madhav-ka-Vas, i.e., the incident of self-immolation of Tara Devi,
a member of Rajput Chauhan family at Hissar, having herself
studied upto Standard VIII, and a mother of a two year old son and
only a 22-days old daughter, exposes inheritance to be an under-
lying motive for carrying out the sati.   The fact that the victim's
relatives on her father's as well as on her husband's side were not
illiterate or uneducated could not mitigate the cruelty perpetrated on
her.   Vaid mentioned in utter dismay, "Later satis in the area have
tended mainly to come from impoverished families in strained
circumstances." (1987 : 23).   She pointed out that all the victims
were burnt by the in-laws, and the natal family was never informed
before the event.   The *sasural* family proved in each case to be the
principal in committing and continuing the crime.   In this they were
abetted by the village mukhia and elites.   "What makes Sati different,"
wrote Vaid, "from the other related crime of burning a daughter-in-
law, is that the murder is a public event, 'endowed' with religious
sanctity invoking the 'Khastriya tradition' of 'heroic death' and
'glorious Hindu womanhood'.   Through it emerges a reinforcing of
pativrata [or *Pativratya*] *dharma*.   In the hagiographical accounts
constructed about the sati, the victim is made into an exemplar of
a dutiful, pious daughter and *bahu* and symbol of conjugal love and
sacrifice.   Thus the oppressed are made to furnish a victim, whose
'willed' death serves to keep other women in patriarchal subordina-
tion in their daily lives."   (idem.)

One cannot but share Vaid's pessimism and sense of total frustration regarding the possibility of rooting out that mentality of the Hindus which lies at the back of the continuation of Sati through the last lap of the twentieth century. Even today one finds a number of defenders of Sati as the nation-wide furore in response to Kanwar's death demonstrates. "The defenders of sati, populist to a man, find the event equally useful as a form of anti-stateism, anti-westernization, and a nativist anti-colonialism. Not a single one of them cares to see that the subjection of women is the basis of her so-called free will, that her low material status is the ineluctable basis of her so-called high spiritual status." (Sangari, op. cit. : 25). The *Samskar* of sati continues, therefore, unabated even today in different parts of the country. (cf. Basu, 1978 : 156-157).

Nearer home, the Burrabazar area of Calcutta, the business locality dominated by traders from the areas adjacent to Jaipur as well as from other areas of Rajasthan saw demonstrations and a *bandh* call by the pro-sati Marwaris. And, there are scores of non-Marwari devotees to the *Sati-mandir* run by the Marwaris.

What is more fearsome of the two — the continuation, though in a sporadic manner, of the "self-burning" of widows proving the negation of the hope that Sati is a subject of academic interest, and the frustration of the expectation that a dispassionate analysis of the phenomenon is possible — is the latter one. The indigenous defenders of the Hindu culture and, *inter alia*, of "Sati", like Sankaracharyya and Banwari (1987) are joined by self-styled lovers of Hindu culture like Patrick D. Harrigan (1987) in creating a tidal wave of emotion in favour of the sacrosanct Hindu culture and all that which may be or is supported in its name. These people forget and make others forget that the Hindu tradition like any other tradition has never been totally static and has continued to change, however slowly and imperceptibly it may have, through time.

It is because of this very fact of the *changing character of the Hindu tradition* that Sati became at a certain historical period a part of it, though there is no Vedic passage about widow burning (Kane, op. cit. : 625) and no dharmasastra except Vishnu's refers to the practice (ibid. : 625-626). That the acceptance or opposition to, revival of and struggle against the practice have been differential

responses of the Hindus to the exigencies of the particular historical
epochs is often forgotten. Even a careful analyst as Kane falls a
victim to the basic attitude that nourishes the "spirit" of Sati.
"Modern India does not justify the practice of sati, but it is *a
warped mentality that rebukes modern Indians for expressing admira-
tion and reverence for the cool and unfaltering courage of Indian
women in becoming satis or performing the jauhar for cherishing their
ideals of womanly conduct.*" (ibid. : 636).

Thus Kane unwittingly expressed his admiration for Suttee which
was described by Emile Durkheim as a case of "altruistic suicide"
probably because of the supposed element of altruism that accom-
panied it.

Durkheim found in the practice an example of the spirit of
altruism in primitive societies (cf Madan, 1979 : 260-261). Altruism
"adequately expresses the opposite state (of egoism) where the ego
is not its own property, where it is not blended with something not
itself, where the goal of conduct is exterior to itself, that is, in one
of the groups in which it participates. So we call the suicide caused
by intense altruism *altruistic suicide* (1978 : 221). People over whom
society has got too strict a control and who have too little individu-
alism may be driven to self-destruction by excessive altruism and
sense of duty. The acts of self-immolation by Hindu widows on the
funeral pyres of their husbands the *harakiri* of Japanese officers
provide illustrations of the same. These "suicides are of the same
nature as obligatory suicide ...... A social prestige...attaches to
suicide, which receives encouragement from this fact, and the refusal
of this reward has effects similar to actual punishment, although to
a lesser degree." (ibid. : 222)

Thus while considering the problem of Sati (suttee), one should
consider, along with other aspects of the Hindu society and culture,
the question as to how the Hindu society viewed in the past and
deems at present the relation of individual and society. India, as
Durkheim saw it, was "a classic soil for this kind of suicide [i.e.,
altruistic suicide]". But what about the view of modern Indians of
their own society at present ? The balance between individual and
society is a delicate one. If it is tilted in favour of the former,
the social fabric may be endangered and egoistic suicide may be one

of the consequences. If, again, the balance is pressed in favour of the collectivity, there is a different kind of threat, the culmination of which may be altruistic suicide and attitudes favouring it. "While the egoist is unhappy," Durkheim very correctly said, "because he sees nothing in the world but the individual, the intemperate altruist's sadness, on the contrary, springs from the individual's seeming wholly unreal to him." (op. cit. : 225). And who can deny that in India even today women are denied this sense of importance of their own selves and identities, which is why even today the practice of Sati thrives ?

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